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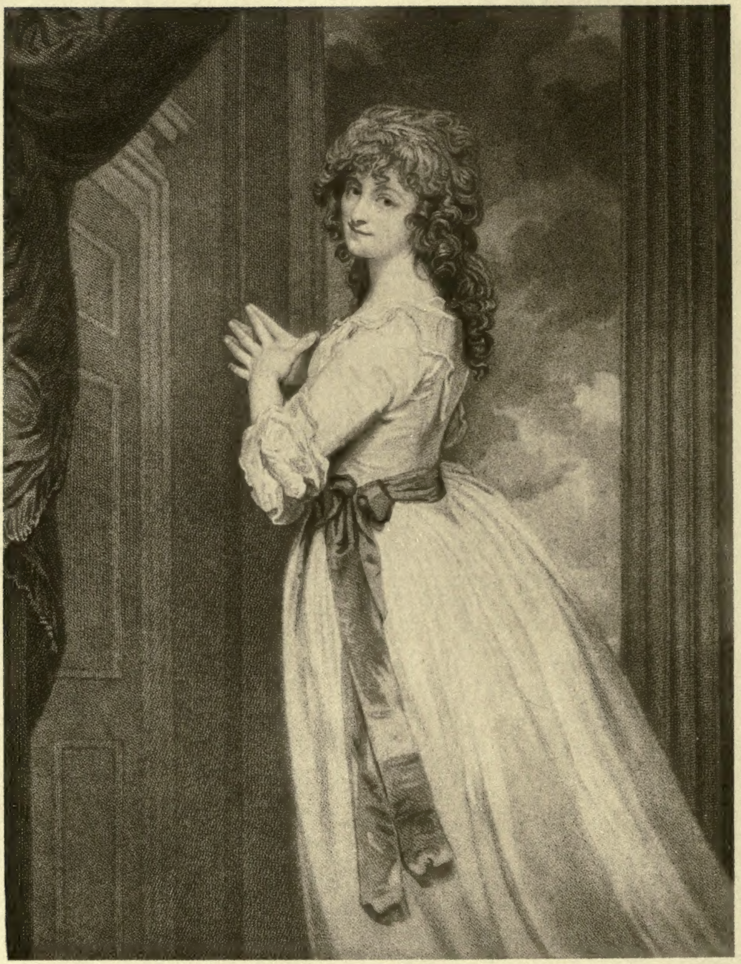
Mrs. Jordan



From an engraving by John Ogborne, 1788
after the painting by George Romney, R.A.

Mrs Jordan
in the character of The Country Girl.

Mrs. Jordan: Child of Nature

By Philip W. Sergeant, Author of "The Empress Josephine, Napoleon's Enchantress," "My Lady Castlemaine," etc.

WITH TWENTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS, INCLUDING
A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE

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MRS. JORDAN

CHAPTER I

THE OPENING MYSTERY

IN the histories of the two celebrated actresses whose names are so often coupled together, through the fact of their association and rivalry at Drury Lane Theatre late in the Eighteenth Century, there are innumerable differences; and among those differences none is more striking than that which marks the beginnings of their lives. Concerning the origin of Mrs. Siddons (born in Bohemia, it is true, but in a most respectable province of Bohemia) there is no mystery. In Mrs. Jordan's case, on the other hand, obscurity has long covered the source whence she came. There was never any dispute, indeed, as to who was her mother. Concerning her father's identity, on the other hand, there was much doubt expressed; and, although what we seem justified in accepting as the truth was early stated, with certain embellishments and certain suppressions, it was disbelieved and has in quite recent times been treated as an invention.

Even if we can point to her father, we can feel sure of little in the story of his connection with her mother.

It may be suspected that much of the obscurity involving Mrs. Jordan's origin was produced by herself intentionally, as a protection against the impertinent curiosity of the public—which, with the aid of the threepenny Press, had already begun to take a morbid interest in the manners, morals, and domestic affairs of actors and actresses. The device was not new in those days, nor is it obsolete now. A full acquaintance with the truth is so often disillusioning; and it would not pay the popular favourite to allow disillusionment to creep in among the audience.

Unfortunately it does not seem possible to clear away the clouds which, if we surmise rightly, Mrs. Jordan strove to cast about her father's conduct. We can only take the early accounts of her family history and, comparing them together, endeavour to establish a fact or two, of which the correctness can be proved from other sources. It is hoped that this process, if it delays a little the start of our narrative, may be held to have a compensation for the reader, who will thereby be introduced to some curious works.

In 1789, when Mrs. Jordan had firmly fixed herself in the good graces of London playgoers, there was issued a small volume entitled *Jordan's Elixir of Life and Cure for the Spleen; or A Collection of all the Songs sung by Mrs. Jordan since her First Appearance in London, with many other*

Favourite Songs sung by her, etc.* To this were prefixed some "authentic memoirs of Mrs. Jordan, now first published," and a portrait of her in the part of Sir Harry Wildair. It is impossible to read the account here given of her early days without supposing her to have inspired or at least sanctioned it.

"Mrs. Jordan," we are told, "was born in the parish of St. Martin's, London, in the year 1764; Mr. Bland, her father, was a gentleman of small fortune and respectable connections, and was first cousin to General James Johnson and Sir Francis Lumm.† In consequence of a severe indisposition, Mr. Bland was ordered to the South of France, but having received little benefit from his excursion, he returned to Wales, where he soon [in 1779, it is subsequently stated] sank into the grave, leaving his widow, and three sons and two daughters, to deplore his death and lament the loss of a property, which was materially injured by the heavy expenses attending a long and tedious illness. If Mrs. Jordan enjoys any hereditary theatrical emanations of genius, they proceed from her mother, who, in early life, appeared on the stage with some reputation, but was impelled to abandon her favourite pursuit to give attention to her domestic concerns and the education of her family."

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* Published by "William Holland, at Garrick's Richard [*sic*], No. 50 Oxford-street, 1789."

† Concerning Sir Francis Lumm, see p. 103 below. General Johnson should be Johnston—the "Irish Johnston" of Walpole and other contemporaries, at one time Governor of Minorca. His mother was a Miss Bland, aunt to Mrs. Jordan's father. (See a communication from Mr. J. F. Fuller, *Notes and Queries*, 10th series, VII., p. 131.)

In the year following the publication of these alleged "authentic memoirs" there appeared the first edition of a work entitled *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, the authorship of which has been attributed to Joseph Haslewood, the antiquary, though he was at the time only twenty-one years of age. In the biography of Mrs. Jordan included in this we find what is apparently the earliest version of the romantic story which afterwards obtained general currency about her parents.

"This Lady's mother," we are here told, "was the daughter of a Welsh dignified Clergyman; her beauty and simplicity kindled a passion in the breast of a Captain Bland, a gentleman of fortune and great personal accomplishments, who was at that time on duty in Wales. She eloped with him to Ireland, where they were married, though both under age. They lived many years together in great happiness, and nine children were the fruits of their affection, one of whom is the present Mrs. Jordan. Whether Captain Bland had expended his fortune or that he was tired of his wife, we cannot decide; but his father Doctor Bland, a civilian in Dublin, procured the marriage to be annulled, as being made in minority, that his son might receive the hand of a lady of great fortune, who had long been his known admirer."*

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* It is interesting to compare with this the obituary notice of Mrs. Jordan in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, July, 1816; there are some curious similarities in the wording. The *G.M.* writer says: "She was the daughter of an Irish officer, of the name of Bland, with whom her mother had eloped from the house of her father, a dignified Clergyman, while the Captain was on duty with his regiment in Wales. Necessity compelled the

The tale continues to the effect that Colonel Bland (as he now was), in spite of the riches acquired by his new alliance, "never enjoyed his former serenity of mind with his second wife; and, whether from a mental or a bodily disorder, he died soon after." On his death the second Mrs. Bland refused all assistance to his children. Some of his friends, with more humanity, did something on their behalf, but left their mother totally unprovided for; whereon "Miss Bland (the present Mrs. Jordan), with commendable spirit and the hope of supporting herself and parent, determined to attempt the stage for a livelihood."

The Captain Bland legend, if we may so call it without implying that it is false, became firmly established among Mrs. Jordan's admirers, and we find it repeated in substantially the same form in one of the two full-length biographies of her which were published more than a dozen years after her death. This was a work entitled originally *The Great Illegitimates: a Public and Private Life of that celebrated Actress, Miss Bland, otherwise Mrs. Ford, or Mrs. Jordan*, &c. which came out with the imprint of J. Duncombe, 19 Little Queen Street, Holborn. It bore neither author's name nor date.

youthful pair, it is said, to have recourse to the stage for support; and the little Dorothea first drew her breath among the Thespian corps. The father of Mrs. Jordan, Captain Bland, was of a very respectable family in Ireland, who were also in possession of a genteel income; his embracing the profession of an actor, therefore, tended to widen the breach already made amongst his relatives by his precipitate marriage; these relatives, at length, succeeded in disannulling the marriage; and Mrs. Bland was left with a numerous family, totally dependant upon herself for that inadequate support afforded by her profession. . . ."

It was reprinted with the omission of the first four words of the title, and in this form alone is represented in the British Museum library. The question whether any alterations were made in the text could only be answered by a comparison of the reprint with the original, which has not been possible. The anonymous writer calls himself "a confidential friend of the departed," and from what he says appears at least to have had some personal acquaintance with her at the time when she passed in the world as Mrs. Ford. He accepts the story of the elopement of Mrs. Jordan's mother—Grace Phillips,* one of three daughters of "a Welsh dignitary of the church"—with Captain Bland and their union in Ireland, "by the rites of the Catholic church," at a time when they were both under twenty; their recourse to the stage for a living; the arrival of nine children, "of whom Mrs. Jordan was born at Waterford in 1762 or 1764"; the ultimate intervention of Dr. Bland, who succeeded in getting his son's marriage invalidated; "Colonel" Bland's desertion of his first wife and family, his remarriage and death; and the total destitution of Mrs. Bland the first.

This *Public and Private Life* has been assigned to 1830; but, in its reprinted form at least, it refers to 1832 as "the present year," and it borrows very largely from the following work.

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* The spelling of the name varies with the different authors—Phillips, Philips, and Philipps all appearing. I have adopted the commonest form of the name, though possibly Philipps was the actual spelling in the family.

In 1831 James Boaden, who had already made a name by his book on Kemble, brought out his *Life of Mrs. Jordan.* In his preface he claims to have "had the pleasure of Mrs. Jordan's personal acquaintance for some years," and he shows in the course of his work that he met her at Bushey when she was living under the protection of the Duke of Clarence. He gives a considerably modified form of the ordinary story, which is brief enough to be quoted in full:

"The mother of Mrs. Jordan was one of three sisters of a Welsh family of the name of Phillips. Their father I believe to have been in orders; but there is little promotion among the Welsh clergy; the scanty provision he could make for his family induced his three daughters to go upon the stage; and we know from unquestionable authority that they were all respectable in the profession. Miss Grace Phillips yielded to the addresses of a Mr. Bland, and she went to Ireland along with him, where they were married by a Catholic priest. I presume she continued her profession without interruption; for her husband was a minor, and his father, being little disposed to sanction his youthful ardour and, as a civilian, entirely master of his ground, procured the marriage to be annulled, as one contracted in nonage and void from want of parental consent."

Here we do not get Captain, later Colonel, Bland, nor the nine children; indeed the story is shorn of half its romance. But it is time now to come to the actually ascertainable facts.

There seems to be no reason to doubt that Grace Phillips was, as the author of the *Public and Private Life* and Boaden both assert, one of the three daughters of a Welsh clergyman. All three may have embraced the theatrical life; we know that two did. In the winter season of 1756-7 Thomas Sheridan, father of Richard Brinsley, was manager of the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin. Among the new players whom he then introduced to the Dublin public were Grace and her sister, of whom we only hear under the name of Miss M. Phillips. Both appear toward the end of 1756 in *The Fair Penitent* (Grace playing Lavinia, and M. Callista) and in *The Conscious Lovers.* Sheridan re-engaged them for the 1757-8 season, and early in 1758 we find Grace as Desdemona to the Othello of Tate Wilkinson, whom Sheridan had now taken into his company. Grace and Wilkinson also appeared together in *Jane Shore* and *Tom Thumb.**

At the end of this season the sisters Phillips left Ireland and for a time disappear from view. Had Grace already met Bland? And who was he? In the account given by *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, we have seen, his father is stated to have been a "Dr. Bland, a civilian in Dublin," and, while the *Public and Private Life* speaks of Dr. Bland, Boaden states that he was a civilian. Now on October 20th, 1760, there died "Dr. Bland, an eminent civilian in Ireland," as he is described in the *Gentleman's Magazine* obituary column. This is the man who is identified with

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* Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage*, X.

Mrs. Jordan's unkind grandfather. The main facts about his life and family are known and may be set forth briefly.

Nathaniel Bland, LL.D., was the second son of the Rev. James Bland, supposed to be a Yorkshireman by extraction, who came over to Ireland in 1692 as chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant, Henry Sidney, Earl of Romney. After being presented with the living of Killarney, the Rev. James rose to be Dean of Ardfert. He married Lucy, daughter of Sir Francis Brewster, a Dublin alderman, and by her had two sons and some daughters. The elder son, Francis, followed in his father's footsteps and entered the church. The younger, Nathaniel, went to the bar and made a good name for himself, becoming in due time judge in the Prerogative Court in Dublin.* He married twice. By his first wife Diana, daughter of Nicholas Kemeys, he had two sons, John—of whom we shall hear again—and James, a curate, whom he made heir to his estate of Derriquin Castle. His second wife was Lucy, daughter of Francis Heaton of Mount Heaton, King's County. She bore him three sons and three daughters. The eldest son was Francis Bland, born about 1735. In the family records this Francis is stated to have married Miss Catherine Mahoney, of Killarney, and on his death in 1778 to have left a son Colonel James Francis, and a daughter Frances, wife of the Rev. Robert Hewson. No hint appears in them of a previous marriage, but this is intelligible if the story of its annulment through Judge Bland's influence is true.

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* Nicholas Carlisle's *Collection for a History of the Ancient Family of Bland* (privately printed in 1826), from which these details are taken, says that he "possessed considerable forensic eloquence, and some of his opinions, still extant, discover great ability, elegant erudition, and classical beauty of style."

When William IV. died, the *Gentleman's Magazine* published, in the course of its notice of his life and reign, the nearest approach to an official statement about Mrs. Jordan.* Herein we are told that "Dora Bland" was a natural daughter of Francis Bland, Esq., of county Kerry, who was father by his wife, Miss Mahoney, of the late Colonel James Francis Bland, of Killarney. We should require very strong evidence before rejecting this clear account, given at a time when it was eminently undesirable to spread any unfounded scandals about one who had so long been the companion of the just dead King. A point in its favour, moreover, is that it shows no trace of having been derived from Boaden or other earlier writers.

The late Mr. Joseph Knight, in his article on Mrs. Jordan in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, says that there is "grave inherent improbability" in the Captain Bland legend, and that "there is some reason to suppose that Bland . . . was merely a stage underling." The latter statement is obviously based on a passage quoted below from P. L. Gordon's *Personal Memoirs*, which, however, is corroborated nowhere else. If Gordon were correct —and it may here be said that he is too loose a writer to inspire confidence in the literal accuracy of his reminiscences—then Mrs. Jordan's father was alive at the beginning, at least, of 1779, and was still with his family. The date is not inconsistent with the assertion in the preface to *Jordan's Elixir*, that the father died in 1779, but it cannot be reconciled with what we know about Francis Bland, son of the Judge. He had been dead over twelve months in early 1779, and had married Miss Mahoney years before. We cannot account for Gordon's story, but we can see no reason to accept it as against all other versions.

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* *G. M.*, August, 1837.

If, in conclusion, we must hazard a guess at the true history of Mrs. Jordan's parents, it may have been as follows. Grace Phillips, previous to her engagement under Sheridan's management in Dublin, had made the acquaintance of Francis Bland, a young officer, who was possibly with his regiment in Wales when he met her.* They fell in love, and, though both were under age, they agreed to join their fortunes. The elopement to Ireland and marriage before a Roman Catholic priest may be true. Francis Bland, dependent for his income on his father (who had already disinherited his first-born John for leaving the army for the stage), forfeited it by his conduct and soon exhausted his ready money. Grace obtained an engagement from Sheridan in the winter of 1756 and played at

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* Mr. Fuller, in his already mentioned communication to *Notes and Queries*, calls him a commissioned officer in a line regiment. He gives much information about the Bland family from various sources, including the Record Office in Dublin. He does not, unfortunately, state whether the annulment of the marriage between Francis Bland and Grace Phillips appears there. If it does, then Mrs. Jordan, we shall see, as a daughter of Francis Bland, must have been even older than she is usually supposed to be.

Smock Alley Theatre until 1758. Whether Bland attempted to act also and failed so badly that he sank to scene-shifting instead is a matter of conjecture. The arrival of children—the number nine appears to be a figment, for the earliest account only speaks of five, and we only hear positively of three or perhaps four*—made matters worse for the unfortunate couple. Judge Bland offered to forgive his son on condition that he would desert the actress, to which he finally consented, though there are grave difficulties in the way of the supposition that he did so in his father's lifetime. If there had been a marriage, it was annulled, and ultimately Francis Bland took to wife a lady from the neighbourhood of his paternal home. His health became bad and he was ordered to France, but died at Dover either on the way there or on his return.† The fate of the abandoned family we shall come to later.

Assuming this to be, approximately, the story of her parentage, we cannot say that Mrs. Jordan took many serious liberties with it. The accounts given in *Jordan's Elixir* and *The Secret History of*

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* Her daughter's "uncle in Wales," of whom Mrs. Jordan speaks in a letter in 1814, seems to be a fourth.

† A memorial was erected to him in the church at Killarney by his cousin Sir Francis Lumm. It bore the inscription:

"To the memory of a once much loved, now much lamented friend, Francis Bland, Esq., on whose kind heart and benevolent spirit, in his forty-third year, at Dover, on the second day of January, 1778, the curtain of this world's stage untimely dropt; this stone is placed by Sir F. L., Bt."

It is this inscription which fixes Francis Bland's birth-year as 1735. If, then, he was a minor when he married Grace Phillips, he must have done so before December, 1756.

the Green Rooms, both published during her lifetime, let Francis Bland off lightly—the former absurdly so, indeed, though this is no doubt to be accounted for by the fact that at the time Mrs. Jordan was a constant visitor to the house of Sir Francis Lumm. She had little cause to revere her father's memory, whereas she was fondly devoted to her mother. But her very affection may well have prompted her to gloss over details which might arouse suspicions about Mrs. Bland's position.

On one point there is certainly a misrepresentation of fact in the tales told while Mrs. Jordan was alive, and that was as to the date of her birth. We need not, however, censure her too severely if we discover that she shared the failing of many women, and not a few men, who are unwilling to admit that so many years have passed over their heads as is really the case. To her earliest biographer, the author of the preface to *Jordan's Elixir*, she gave the date 1764. Some stage rival, we may imagine, ventured to question this, and her friends took up arms in her cause. It is amusing to note that, though *The Secret History of the Green Rooms* refrains from naming her birth-year directly, the first edition states that, "some disputes having arisen respecting the age of Mrs. Jordan, the register was searched, by which it appears that she is now just six and twenty." Three years later, in 1793, the third edition alters this as follows: "The malice of her enemies, among other things, attempted to hurt her feelings by that most mortifying of all circumstances to women—old age. . . . The register of her birth was searched, and it appears that she now is about twenty-seven."

To the last story Mrs. Jordan adhered finally, and on her tombstone it was recorded, by a friendly hand, that she died at the age of fifty only. Nevertheless, two warm eulogists of her did not find it possible to accept the claim. The *Public and Private Life*, as we have seen, says that she was born at Waterford *in* 1762 *or* 1764; and Boaden "ventures, in opposition to the usual statements, to throw the birth of Mrs. Jordan as far back as 1762." Boaden also places the birth in the neighbourhood of Waterford. In the absence of any evidence from a register of birth or baptism it is impossible to go further. One consideration, however, requires attention. Dr. Bland is said to have procured the annulment of his son's marriage. Dr. Bland died on October 20th, 1760. It rather strains probability to suppose that the eminent civilian's intervention only took effect after his death, or that husband and wife continued to live together after their marriage was annulled. A record of Dr. Bland's action would therefore be a serious argument for putting back Mrs. Jordan's birth at least a year before the ordinarily accepted time, even if she was the youngest of her family.

Here, indeed, is what the late Professor Verrall used to call "a boggle." In the following pages, however, we shall assume that our heroine was born in 1762, having found no proof that she was older.

CHAPTER II

FIRST STEPS ON THE STAGE

THE obscurity which envelopes the origin of Dorothy Bland, as it is supposed that she was christened,* extends to the sixteenth year of her life, when she followed her mother's example and became an actress. The desperate state of her family's affairs had made it necessary that she should do something to earn money, and she had already made an attempt in another profession. The author of the memoir in *Jordan's Elixir* says:

"Mrs. Bland, properly conceiving that industry was not only the spring to opulence, but the best security to her unprotected orphans, had our heroine and her sister accordingly instructed in the millinery business, which they afterwards followed in Dublin, to which city they removed after Mr. Bland's death, which happened in 1779. But those exquisite comic powers, which have so often charmed the public, could not be restrained; she broke from the trammels of a dull and insipid profession, which was incompatible with her nature, and in the November of 1780, made her first appearance as Lucy in *The Virgin Unmasked*,* in Crow Street Theatre, under the name of Miss Francis."

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* Her common signature, after she became famous, was Dora. Her father, it may be noted, had a younger sister called Dorothea, while Dorothy was a frequent name in the Yorkshire family of Bland from whom Dr. Nathaniel's descent is traced.

We may accept the main facts of this account on the supposition that (with the exception of Bland's death, which is a year wrong) they are post-dated two years. The writer no doubt obtained his figures at an interview with the lady. William Oxberry, the comedian, who left behind him when he died in 1824 a projected Dramatic Biography, subsequently edited and published by his widow, states that it was in 1778 that Mrs. Jordan made her first appearance at Ryder's theatre; and this harmonizes well with the immediately following facts of her career. It may therefore be assumed that Dorothy Bland and her sister were milliner's assistants in Dublin in 1777, and that in the following year Dorothy applied to Ryder for an engagement in his company.

It is true that, if we believe Oxberry, we are forced to reject the romantic tale told by J. D. Herbert in his *Irish Varieties for the Last Fifty Years* of his early acquaintance with Mrs. Jordan and her family; or, if not entirely to reject it, to suppose that the long lapse of time—*Irish Varieties* appeared in 1836—caused Herbert's recollections to be inaccurate. He says that one fine summer's day in the year 1780, as he was returning from the wall leading to the Pigeon-house, about two miles from Dublin, "a lad, about fourteen years of age, with a handkerchief bundle in his hand, accosted me; he told me he had just landed from Wales, accompanied by his mother and two sisters; that they were going up to Dublin, and were perfect strangers." He then introduced his family, and all four accompanied Herbert into Dublin. They asked him if he could recommend to them comfortable but not expensive lodgings, which he did in South Great George's Street, only three doors from where he lived himself. After this he saw them frequently and became an intimate friend. The story which the mother told him was that she had been an actress, but on marrying a half-pay captain had given up the stage and retired with him to Wales for economy. On his death she had nothing but the allowance of a captain's widow, on which she failed to support herself and her three children. Wishing to educate the latter well, she returned to the stage, for which she was also training her elder daughter. (Other writers know of no daughter older than Dorothy.) She had come to Dublin with a letter of introduction to Mr. Ryder. On this being presented, Ryder was pleased with the apparent talent of the elder girl—who was handsome, naturally graceful and elegant, Herbert says—and gave her the opportunity of appearing in his company.

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* The usual story is that her first appearance was as Phœbe in *As You Like It*. So say the *Public and Private Life*, Boaden's *Life*, and Herbert's *Irish Varieties*. But the above statement has this claim to attention, that it is made in a very much earlier work.

Unhappily she was seized with such terror on her first night that she could not utter a word and had to be led off the stage by the manager himself. Next day he called and consoled the weeping mother, engaged her in place of her elder daughter, and at the same time offered to give Dolly, the younger, a trial. The mother was doubtful, but Ryder insisted, handed Dolly a copy of *As You Like It* and told her to get up the part of Phœbe. She made a hit the first night, and soon became a general favourite in Dublin.

A bill survives to prove the appearance of "Miss Francis," in a not unimportant part at Crow Street Theatre in May, 1780, so that there is no doubt about the incorrectness of Herbert's date. As to his tale as a whole, it lacks confirmation, and he is too much at pains to show how well he was once acquainted with the celebrity to make it convincing to us. What vestige of truth there is in it is impossible to tell.

Thomas Ryder, under whose friendly care Mrs. Jordan first stepped on to the stage, had six years previously become manager of the Smock Alley Theatre, which dated from before the Restoration but had been rebuilt in 1736. He was as an actor very popular with Dublin audiences, and as a manager of good repute with his companies. Smock Alley prospered under him; but having acquired also the more recent Crow Street Theatre, which was only built in 1758, he shut up the other house and allowed the rent of it to get into arrears to the extent of £12,000 or

£15,000.* This was a mistake which cost him dear. Dr. Wilson, the proprietor of Smock Alley, receiving a secret overture for the lease of his theatre, offered Ryder to remit his debt if he would give up his tenancy. Ryder agreed and then found that Smock Alley was opening in opposition to him under Richard Daly, one of his former subordinates, of whom we shall soon hear much. Eighteenth Century Dublin could ill support more than one theatre of any pretensions, as had been proved over and over again. As many as three had occasionally entered into rivalry in the past, but always with injury to all and disastrous results to at least two. Even a simple duel might be fatal, as when Thomas Sheridan was ruined by the opposition of the partners Barry and Woodward. It was to avoid the chance of such a fate that Ryder took over Crow Street as well as Smock Alley and closed the latter so as to be able to make a profit out of the former.

The blow was, therefore, severe to the popular actor-manager when he realised that by letting Smock Alley pass out of his hands he had unwittingly helped to raise up against himself a competitor of the most dangerous kind; for the new lessee was not the man to lose time in making his influence felt.

Before Richard Daly enters into this story, however, we must return to Dorothy Bland and her first engagement at the Crow Street Theatre. Of the Dublin playhouses at this period a vivid picture is given in the *Personal Sketches of his own Times* of Sir Jonah Barrington, who rose to be Judge of the High Court of Admiralty in Ireland, and who not only saw the start of Mrs. Jordan's career but also "had the gratification of knowing intimately that amiable woman and justly celebrated performer."* In his description we see the theatre lighted with tallow-candles, stuck in tin circles hanging from the middle of the stage and snuffed every now and then by one of the performers; the boxes occupied by dignified ladies and gentlemen almost in full court dress; the gallery "very noisy and very droll"; the pit "full of critics and wise men," with an occasional sprinkling of students from Trinity College, who had forced themselves in to avenge an insult, often imaginary, to some member of their body; and on each side of the stage a soldier † with fixed bayonet, standing close to the boxes, ready to keep the audience in order. The precaution of a military guard was by no means unnecessary, since when the students were out to redress a grievance, "all the ladies, well-dressed men, and peaceable people generally decamped forthwith, and the young gentlemen as generally proceeded to beat or turn out the residue of the audience and to break everything that came within their reach."

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* *Secret History of the Green Rooms*, article on Ryder. He was a very extravagant man, who at the time of his supremacy in Dublin "kept a chariot, footmen, and the most splendid equipage . . . two country-houses and two town-houses." It is not surprising, therefore, to learn (in 1790, the year before his death) that "Mr. Ryder has a numerous family unprovided for."

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* *Personal Sketches*, II., 216. A few lines later Barrington breaks out, in the manner so characteristic of himself and his age: "I have known her when in the busy bustling exercise of her profession:—I have known her when in the tranquil lap of ease, of luxury, and of magnificence. I have seen her in a theatre, surrounded by a crowd of adulating dramatists:—I have seen her in a palace, surrounded by a numerous, interesting, and beloved offspring. I have seen her happy:—I have seen her, alas! *miserable:* and I could not help participating in all her feelings."

† These soldiers on the stage were not confined to the Dublin theatres, however, but were in evidence in London also in the time of Garrick. Of him it is recorded that he was playing King Lear once when one of the soldiers "blubbered like a child"; and "Mr. Garrick, who was as fond of a compliment as most men, when the play was over sent for the man to his room and gave him half-a-crown." (J. T. Smith, *A Book for a Rainy Day*.)

Such an element in the house was a terror to managers, but it was in a position to make itself useful to those whom it adopted as its favourites. A similar element in the Cork Theatre, we shall see, in the following year took our heroine under its protection and insisted on her being accorded a second benefit to repair the shortcomings of her first. As Jonah Barrington was one of the youthful bloods now at Trinity College, Dublin, we may gather that Miss Francis was received into high favour with the students. Anyhow these are Barrington's words concerning her *début:*

"It is worthy of observation that her early appearances in Dublin were not in any of those characters, save one"—he does not specify which, but perhaps he is thinking of Priscilla Tomboy, in *The Romp*, a little later—"wherein she afterwards so eminently excelled; but such as, being more girlish, were better suited to her spirits and her age. I . . . could not but observe that in these parts she was *perfect* even on her first appearance. She had no art, in fact, to study; nature was her sole instructress. Youthful, joyous, animated, and droll, her laugh bubbled up from her heart, and her tears welled out ingenuously from the deep spring of feeling. Her countenance was all expression, without being all beauty: her form, then light and elastic—her flexible limbs—the juvenile but indescribable graces of her every movement, impressed themselves, as I perceived, indelibly upon all who attended even her earliest performances."

This is a very handsome tribute to the natural talent of the little actress. We cannot refrain from quoting also, rather on account of its delightful pomposity than because of the information conveyed, what Boaden has to say with regard to her training. "The studies of the stage," he observes, "constitute a better education than is commonly derived from the schools. What *other* ladies have under their command, constantly encamped, such 'an army of good words' as our actresses? Who, besides them, are so stored with every variety of neat and polished thought?* Who else can have equal self-possession, equal address; and, above all, who ever approach them in distinct articulation, in voluble or impressive delivery? . . . We shall not therefore be surprised that, without the possibility of her receiving an expensive education, which her embarrassed parents could not afford, Mrs. Jordan acquired, almost domestically, a very correct diction in her native language, and the power of

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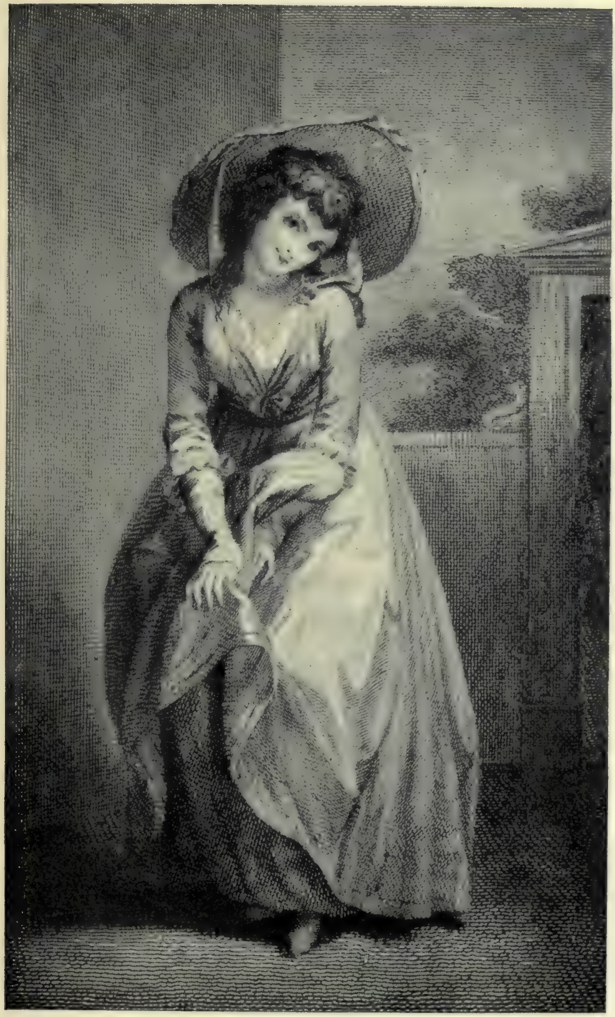
* Boaden, it must be remembered, wrote long before the days of Musical Comedy.



From an engraving by Angus after a drawing by Thomas Stothard.

MRS. JORDAN

as *Priscilla Tomboy* in "The Romp."

[*Facing p. 22.*

composing agreeably in either prose or verse, with little premeditation."

We shall have an opportunity later of judging the merits of Mrs. Jordan's compositions in prose and verse. In the meantime we may admit that she did show signs that her education had not been altogether neglected, and that no more serious complaint was ever made against her diction than that she had a slight brogue in her early acting days in England. The famous Mrs. Inchbald, it is true, while enthusiastic about her art, states that "most of her words were uttered with a kind of provincial dialect"; but Boaden makes a convincing retort to this. "It was not of that description at all," he says. "It was a principle of giving to certain words a fulness and comic richness which rendered them more truly representatives of the ideas they stood for; it was expressing all the juice from the grape of the laughing vine. . . . It was not provincial dialect—it was humorous delivery, and, as a charm, only inferior to her laugh."

If, however, she was admirably fitted by natural talent and at least moderately well trained for the stage, Crow Street Theatre did not offer much scope for her ambition. She might appeal to the hearts of T.C.D.; but her manager, whatever he thought of her performances, was unable to offer her better parts than what Oxberry calls "the round of maudlin young ladies and third-rate sentimentalists." Of one variation from this round we have evidence; but, owing to the carelessness of Boaden in describing Mrs. Jordan's Dublin days, her first essay in a "breeches-part" has been attributed to the period under Daly's, not, as it should be, under Ryder's management. Boaden says that Daly "resorted to a singular species of theatrical entertainment, by the novelty whereof he proposed to rival his competitors . . . namely that of *reversing characters*, the men performing the female, and the females the male parts in opera and comedy." He then goes on to speak of the production of *The Governess.* As it happens, however, a bill has been found of O'Keeffe's benefit at Crow Street on May 20th, 1780, where in *The Governess* Ryder played Ursula, Owenson Sophia, Johnson Flora, and so on, while among the male impersonators Miss Francis was Lopez.*

The story of the original production of *The Governess* is not very creditable to Ryder. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, when barely twenty-four, wrote his comic opera *The Duenna* for Covent Garden, where it achieved such success as to be performed seventy-five times during the season of 1775-6. The managers of a theatre then open in Fishamble Street, Dublin, brought over *The Duenna* to Ireland. Ryder, to defeat them, pirated Sheridan's work and put on a very close copy of it at his theatre, under the name of *The Governess.* He was prosecuted for this, but escaped on a technical point, and so was able to continue his illicit profits from Sheridan's work.

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* Mr. W. J. Lawrence, *Notes and Queries*, 9th series, VII. p. 221, records his discovery of this bill. It is, of course, possible that Daly copied Ryder's idea later, but even so Boaden's words are inaccurate.

In *The Duenna* Lopez is a low comedian's part. To be played by a girl of nineteen, Don Ferdinand's featherbed-and-bottle-loving servant must surely have been considerably altered in the pirated version. But at O'Keeffe's benefit, no doubt, the performance of *The Governess* was meant as a mere piece of foolery.

Ryder does not appear to have been to blame for the comparatively slow advance of the young actress under his management. He had a strong company, and a new comer in it had to win his or her way by force of merit and by degrees. That there were ways in which merit could be supplemented and progress in the profession accelerated, "Miss Francis" was destined to learn; but Ryder was not to be her teacher.

Francis, we have seen, was the name under which Dorothy Bland elected to make her appearance at Crow Street. By it Barrington knew both mother and daughter. Herbert calls the latter Miss Frances. P. L. Gordon, on the other hand, calls her Miss Phillips. The mother seems to have adopted the style of Francis, at some period of her married life, with the idea of placating her husband's relatives—though, as a matter of fact, their family-name had already suffered the disgrace of association with the stage. By deferring to them, however, she hoped to make things easier for her children afterwards. She only reverted to the style of Bland, it is said, when, in periods of irritation, she endeavoured to mortify them. Perhaps it was not until after her husband's death that she herself regularly used the name of Mrs. Bland;* and by that time she had long ceased to act. Nor do we hear of any actual appearance of the future Mrs. Jordan at a theatre as Miss Bland.

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* She must, by the way, be distinguished from the well-known Dublin and Covent Garden actress, her senior in the profession, who was successively Mrs. Bland, Mrs. Hamilton, and Mrs. Sweeny, but was at the height of her fame Mrs. Bland. Rather curiously, her first husband is said to have been "of some very inferior order at Covent Garden Theatre"—not, however, a scene-shifter, we may presume. In her old age, when deserted by Captain Sweeny, she was taken into the York Company for a time by Tate Wilkinson, who thus forms a link between these two ladies of the same name.

To yet a third Mrs. Bland we shall come later.

CHAPTER III

RICHARD DALY

RICHARD DALY, the first villain—if we omit her father—who comes into the life of Dorothy Bland, was a man of good education and intended originally to follow the legal profession. Before going over to England to enter at the Temple he was at Trinity College, Dublin. It is at Dublin that we first hear of him, after he had begun his study of the Law, but apparently while he was on a visit to his native land in vacation-time. Somewhere about the period when Dorothy and her sister were endeavouring to learn the millinery business* Jonah Barrington made the acquaintance of Daly, in a curious fashion. Duelling was then extraordinarily prevalent in Ireland, as no one helps us to realise better than Barrington himself. "No young fellow," he says, "could finish his education till he had exchanged shots with some of his acquaintances. The first two questions always asked as to a young man's respectability and qualifications, particularly when he proposed for a lady-wife, were—'What family is he of?'—'Did he ever blaze?'"

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* Barrington gives the date of his duel with Daly as March 20th, but he does not state the year. The rules of duelling, however, to which he alludes, were "settled at Clonmell summer assizes, 1777" (*Personal Sketches*, II., 14).

Before giving Barrington's account of his encounter with Daly it is necessary to state that the "Fire-eaters" were a duelling society of great repute in Ireland at this time, who had drawn up an elaborate code of rules to regulate affairs of honour, and that even those who had not the privilege of belonging to the club held the rules in respect. Barrington says:

"A young gentleman of Galway, Mr. Richard Daly, then a Templar, had the greatest predilection for single combat of any person (not a society fire-eater) I ever recollect. He had fought sixteen duels in the space of two years: three with swords and thirteen with pistols—yet with so little skill or so much good fortune that not a wound worth mentioning occurred in the course of the whole."

He proceeds to relate how he was surprised one winter's evening at Trinity by receiving an invitation from Mr. Daly—to whom he had never spoken a word in his life—to fight him early next morning. It was considered impossible to decline a first overture of this nature, so Barrington accepted the invitation without enquiry and chose the field of Donnybrook Fair as the spot for the encounter. He secured as his second Crosby, brother to the baronet who suffered death after a court-martial at Carlow in 1798. Barrington had no pistols of his own, but the ingenious Crosby (who was later the first Irishman to construct a balloon and fly to England in it) put together some old locks, barrels, and stocks, and thus manufactured three. The next morning before 7 o'clock the meeting took place.

"I shall never forget Daly's figure," says Barrington. "He was a very fine-looking young fellow, but with such a squint that it was totally impossible to say what he looked at except his nose, of which he never lost sight. His dress (they had come in a coach) made me ashamed of my own. He wore a pea-green coat; a large tucker with a diamond brooch stuck in it; a three-cocked hat with a gold button-loop and tassels; and silk stockings; and a *couteau-de-chasse* hung gracefully dangling from his thigh. In fact, he looked as if already standing in a state of triumph, after having vanquished and trampled on his antagonist."

Crosby was not alarmed. "Ground, gentlemen!" he cried. "Ground, ground—damn measurement!" Then he whispered in his principal's ear: "*Medio tutissimus ibis.* Never look at the head or the heels. Hip the macaroni! The hip for ever, my boy!"

Daly's second here intervened with an attempt at apology. There had been a mistake, he explained, which Mr. Daly hoped they would excuse. Would they not shake hands? Barrington was willing, but

Crosby would not hear of it. He pulled out the book of rules drawn up by the Fire-eaters. "Rule No. 7: 'No apology can be received after the parties meet, without a fire,'" he read, adding: "A young man on his first blood cannot break rule, particularly with a gentleman so used to the sport as Mr. Daly. Come, gentlemen, proceed."

Daly looked displeased, but took his ground about nine paces from his antagonist, presenting a full front. They fired, and at once Daly staggered back, crying, "I'm hit, sir!" He was indeed hit, as was proved when his waistcoat was opened; but Barrington had fired higher than his friend advised, and in consequence his bullet had struck Daly's brooch, breaking it and driving a piece of the setting into his breast-bone. Crosby cursed the damp powder and calmly pulled out the fragment of brooch. Daly said not a word, but pressed a cambric handkerchief to his breast and bowed. He declined to explain the reason of his challenge, his second pulling out of his pocket another copy of the Fire-eaters' rules and quoting No. 8, by which, if the challenged party accepted the duel without enquiring the reason for it, the challenger need not afterwards divulge it. And so, without further conversation, the affair came to an end.

If Daly had never behaved worse in other departments of life than he did on the duelling-ground his character would not stand so ill as it does; for if he was a swaggerer, at least he was not destitute of animal courage. But off the field, if he had redeeming traits in his character, they seem to have failed to impress themselves on his contemporaries. It is true that after adopting the stage as his profession he distinguished himself from the majority of managers, including immeasurably better actors than himself, by saving a sufficient fortune to maintain himself and his family when, at the end of seventeen years, he retired. As he was a keen gambler, however, and unscrupulous in his money-transactions, we can hardly say that it was thrift that enabled him to provide for his old age.

Before he had been long at the Temple, Daly discovered that he would be unable to make his income meet his expenses, and accordingly he abandoned all hopes of the Law and turned his attention to the stage. He had at least physical advantages to start with. Boaden corroborates what we have already heard from Barrington. "Daly, in person," he says "was remarkably handsome, and his features would have been agreeable but for an inveterate and most distressing squint."* Having decided to try his fortune as an actor, he went to his fellow-countryman Macklin for instruction. Macklin can scarcely have been a pleasant teacher, for (according to the *Memoirs* of Holcroft, who had some experience of him) "blockhead," "fool," and "scoundrel" were familiar expressions in his mouth towards his pupils, and he commonly asked them why they did not think of becoming bricklayers rather than players. However, after a course of training with him, Daly succeeded in getting into the Covent Garden company during the winter season 1778-9. We may identify him with one of the anonymous "gentlemen" who figure in the Covent Garden bills this season. In the cast of *Othello*, on March 4th, 1779, the Moor's representative was "Gentleman, his first appearance." It is recorded of Daly that he performed unsuccessfully as Othello at the beginning of his career on the boards. On April 8th, *The Provoked Husband* was played, the Lord Townly (one of Daly's parts later) being "Gentleman, his second appearance"; and twelve days later came *Cymbeline*, with Daly (now named) making his third appearance, in the character of Iachimo.*

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* "Like Wilkes," he continues, "he must have been a very unwelcome adversary to meet with the sword, because the eye told the opposite party nothing of his intentions."

It is probable that Daly's short experience at Covent Garden did not encourage him to entertain the hope of making a fortune in London, for he took an opportunity which came his way of returning to Ireland. Among those whom he had met at Covent Garden were Anne Crawford, who had made her reputation on the stage first as Mrs. Dancer and then as Mrs. Barry (wife of Spranger

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* Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage*, VI., 95, 96, 97. The last entry reads :—

"[April] 20. Daly's bt. *Cymbeline*. Posthumus (for that night only) = Crawford, his 2nd appearance : Jachimo = Daly, his 3rd appearance : Imogen = Mrs. Crawford—a bad house." It is not explained why Daly should have had a benefit at this early period of his connection with the stage, but it may have been a compensation for a small salary or perhaps none at all.

Barry), and her third husband, a young man whom she had only recently married when the 1778-9 season began. Both the Crawfords had played with Daly, the lady as Desdemona to his Othello, and perhaps they saw more than the public did in his acting. At any rate, as they were taking a company over to Ireland, they offered him an engagement, which he accepted. After visiting Cork with them and meeting with some success he came to Dublin, called on Ryder, and asked to join the Crow Street company. Ryder agreed to engage him, and gave him his first chance before a Dublin audience in the part which he had already sustained in *The Provoked Husband* at Covent Garden. Daly profited beyond all expectation by this opening. The Lady Townly on the occasion was a clever comic actress, Mrs. Lyster, formerly Miss Barsanti, a musical pupil of Fanny Burney's father. She was at this time a widow, and when Daly proposed that they should carry into real life the relationship which they bore to one another on his first appearance on the stage together, she consented. Possessed now of the assets of a favourable introduction to the Irish public and a wife of established reputation, Daly determined to make a start for himself, taking advantage of Ryder's situation with regard to the Smock Alley Theatre. Going privately to Dr. Wilson, he made an offer for the lease of the closed house. Wilson, as we have already heard, got back the lease from the incautious Ryder in return for letting him off his debt; and so Smock

Alley, under the name of the City Theatre, entered once more into rivalry with Crow Street.*

Whence Daly obtained his capital does not appear, but he certainly must have had command of money. He spared his former chief in no way, showing in particular his talent for managership by securing the newest and most popular plays from London and mounting them to the best of his ability in Dublin. It is said that he took as his motto at Smock Alley, "We can't command success, but we'll endeavour to deserve it"; while Ryder adopted the rather too humble, "The less we deserve, the more merit in your bounty." In the end Smock Alley won, and Ryder was reduced to enlisting in the company of his rival, who became known as "King Daly of the Dublin Theatre"; but this was at a later period than that with which we are concerned. When Dorothy Bland, as Miss Francis, was playing her small parts under Ryder's management at Crow Street the struggle was only in its opening stage. Arising out of it, however, an opportunity came to her which both brought her quickly to grief and put her on the road to her ultimate greatness.

One device by which the warring theatres could damage one another was by poaching players. It is possible, but not certain, that Daly made the first offer to Miss Francis to leave Ryder and join him. If he did so, he showed a better discrimination than Ryder. Anyhow, whether Daly approached the young actress or she him, she transferred her services from Crow Street to Smock Alley. Owing to some loose statements made in the *Personal Memoirs* published in 1830 by a Scottish gentleman named Pryse Lockhart Gordon, her connection with Daly has hitherto been assigned to too early a date. Gordon entered the Army in the autumn of 1778, and was very soon ordered to Cork on recruiting service, to relieve an officer who was returning to England. He writes, as if at the beginning of his stay at Cork: "Mrs. Jordan, at that time Miss Phillips, was brought down from Dublin by her friend Mr. Daly, the Smock Alley manager, who had introduced her to the stage the preceding year." It is clear that Gordon must really mean Ryder, not Daly, though the slip seems to have escaped attention generally among later writers upon Mrs. Jordan's life. It was Ryder who introduced her to the stage in 1778, and as Gordon left Ireland again for the West Indies in 1780 he cannot have seen her under Daly's management.

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* *Thespian Dictionary*, articles on Richard Daly and Thomas Ryder. Daly is there said to have re-opened Smock Alley in 1781, a date which agrees well with the facts of his early theatrical career as mentioned above, but not with P. L. Gordon's story below. J. T. Gilbert's *History of the City of Dublin* gives October, 1781, as the month of Daly's opening.

Another statement made by Gordon, to which we have already alluded, is to the effect that Heaphy, the manager of the Cork theatre, engaged the future Mrs. Jordan for the season at a salary of twenty shillings a week, "along with her father, who was employed as a scene-shifter." As we have said, we cannot account for this story, and there the matter must be left.

Having presented his readers with two puzzles, one of which still lacks a solution, Gordon goes on to tell of the experiences of Miss Phillips, as he calls her, at Cork:

"The young lady was at this time in her seventeenth year, and though not a regular beauty she was universally admired and proved a great attraction. On this account the manager gave her a benefit, but for want of patronage it proved a complete failure, the expenses of the house being more than her receipts. A party of young men . . . were desirous that their favourite should have another benefit, and they called lustily for Heaphy to come on the stage, but he would not appear. The young Pats were, however, determined to carry their point, and being joined by the pit, they proceeded to tear up the benches and to attack the orchestra, who, to drown the clamour, had begun fiddling. This was alarming, and the acting-manager, O'Keefe, Heaphy's son-in-law, at length judged it prudent to make his appearance, when a spokesman delivered in an appropriate harangue the desire of the audience that Miss Phillips should have a free benefit. O'Keefe remonstrated, stating that the season had been unprofitable to the manager; but this excuse was not admitted, and he was compelled to yield to the wishes of the public, *alias* a score of wild bucks, of which I made one."*

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* Gordon also relates that he met the young actress at a supper-party, at which John Henderson, then in Cork, was present. "This celebrated actor complimented her in the most flattering manner on her talents, advising her to study her profession and to assume a higher walk in comedy than playing Romps; and success, he said, would be certain."

The second benefit brought its recipient forty pounds—" an immense sum in her eyes," Gordon supposes, " as it was probably the first money she ever had." Her popularity increased before the season closed, and " on her return to Dublin her salary was raised to three guineas a week."

If this Cork visit can be placed in the summer of 1780, when Daly came back to Ireland with Mr. and Mrs. Crawford, it is possible that he and Dorothy Bland first met at Cork, as the Crawfords are said to have taken him there with them. In any case, when in the following winter-season he joined Ryder in Dublin, he found her no mere *débutante*, but one who could be reckoned on to please audiences when she was given a fair opportunity. She was, therefore, worth stealing from Ryder. As soon as she came over to Smock Alley he rewarded her with rôles more suited to her ambitions than those which she had hitherto been allowed to take in Dublin. Boaden now introduces her impersonation of Lopez, but, as we have heard, errs in making Daly responsible for this. Her earliest appearance at the City Theatre of which we have direct evidence is as Adelaide in *The Count of Narbonne*.* Herbert says that a representative of Adelaide being required, Captain Jephson, author of the play, came to the theatre, and that, after a trial of reading among the candidates, Miss D. Francis was selected as the best. "The public were surprised at the choice of a Hoyden to perform a part in tragedy of such feeling and interest; but they were cured of their surprise by astonishment when they beheld her in the part perform it to such admiration that the author declared, if she had made her *début* in that part, there was every probability of her making as good an impression in tragedy as she had in comedy."

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* Mr. Lawrence, in his already mentioned contribution to *Notes and Queries*, shows that she played in *The Count of Narbonne* at the City Theatre on February 19th, 1782. Other interesting discoveries made by him are that on April 24th she was Lady Anne to John Kemble's Gloster; and on May 6th Maria in *The School for Scandal*.

Nevertheless a more important event was her first appearance as Priscilla Tomboy in *The Romp*. In this she was one day to delight London audiences. In fact, such parts were those in which she especially shone, and (despite Henderson's advice) it was by the portrayal of "romps" as much as by anything else that Mrs. Jordan made so enduring a name in the history of the English theatre. She was fortunate, in these Smock Alley days, in discovering a line in which she did not compete with her manager's wife; for Mrs. Daly, it is observed by Boaden, "was extremely tenacious as to the characters to which she had the prescriptive right of excellence as well as situation." The manager was constrained, by the frequent offence which he gave to his wife in another way—he was reputed to be "the general lover in his theatrical company"—to be careful not to offend her by assigning to his junior actresses parts to which she laid claim.

Not only in acting, but in singing also did success befall Miss Francis now. One of the triumphs won by her at Smock Alley was in her rendering of a song called *Melton Oysters*, with which she is said to have attracted a number of crowded houses. That she did not do this through the merits of the words, at least, which she was called upon to sing may be judged from the following verses:

> "There was a clever, likely lass,
> Just come to town from Glo'ster;
> And she did get her livelihood
> By crying Melton Oysters.
>
> "She bore her basket on her head
> In the genteelest posture;
> And ev'ry day and ev'ry night
> She cried her Melton Oysters.
>
> * * * *
>
> "And now she is a lady gay,
> For Billingsgate has lost her;
> She goes to Masquerades and Play,
> No more cries Melton Oysters."*

At the end of the Dublin season Daly took his company on a tour in the South of Ireland. One of the places visited was Waterford, and here it was that there occurred what Sir Jonah Barrington calls "the first grave incident" in Mrs. Jordan's life—although we might indeed suppose that her entry upon a stage career was a graver incident than the reception of a proposal of marriage which she was persuaded to decline and possibly thought no more about. The aspirant to her hand was a Lieutenant Charles Doyne of the "Greens"—the

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* *Jordan's Elixir of Life.*

3rd Regiment of Heavy Cavalry, then quartered at Waterford. Barrington, who was at Trinity College with Doyne and knew him well, describes him as not handsome, but a worthy gentleman. "Struck with the *naïveté* and almost irresistible attractions of the young performer," he says, "his heart yielded and he became seriously and honourably attached to her." He confided in Barrington, who encouraged him to urge his suit. But unhappily Doyne had very small private means and could not live on his commission even without a wife. Mrs. Bland, who was travelling with her daughter (as her chaperone, not as a member of Daly's company, it seems), refused to see in the cavalryman an eligible son-in-law. The early biographers of Mrs. Jordan discover in this attitude of the mother a prescience of the future celebrity of her child. It is unfortunate for Mrs. Bland's credit that, while she was able to protect this child from the honourable advances of Lieutenant Doyne, she was unable subsequently to defend her from the vile schemes of Daly. No one, however, seems to have blamed her for Dorothy's ruin, and we do not know enough of the circumstances to condemn Mrs. Bland. The stage no doubt gained by the fact that Miss Francis did not change her name for that of Mrs. Doyne.

Another person is said to have aided Mrs. Bland in bringing about the rejection of Lieutenant Doyne's proposal of marriage; namely Robert Owenson, noted both as one of the best of Irish comedians and as the father of Sydney, afterwards

Lady Morgan. Owenson was at this time about thirty-seven, and a tall, handsome man. He had been connected with the Dublin stage for five years and had made himself popular not only by his acting* but also by his kindly disposition. He took a warm interest in Miss Francis, according to Barrington, and strongly advised her mother to refuse the offer for her daughter's hand. So Lieutenant Doyne was left behind at Waterford, "for a little time almost inconsolable."

We do not know what salary our heroine received from Daly, though, if it is true that after the visit to Cork when P. L. Gordon met her she got as much as three guineas a week, Daly cannot have given her less. Nevertheless it would seem that she very soon was involved in money difficulties, for which the only reason that can be conjectured is that her family had already begun to take an unfair advantage of her tenderness of heart and to help itself from her ever-open purse. Whatever the truth about Bland the father, Mrs. Bland had no outside source of maintenance for herself and her children; and she either was, or thought herself, incapable of earning anything. Dorothy was therefore called upon to keep both her mother and her juniors. Some additional call seems to have been made upon her resources, which she found herself unable to meet.* In her need Richard Daly saw his opportunity. He advanced money to her and then reclaimed payment in another way. According to William Oxberry, this was Daly's regular practice towards those ladies upon whom he had a design, seconding his attempts with an arrest for debt if they resisted and often having recourse to brutal violence. Boaden evidently believes that Daly proceeded to the full limit of his villainy in this case, for after quoting Oxberry he says:

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* The *Thespian Dictionary* says that he was a favourite with the galleries, but that his representation of Irish characters was highly coloured and would have been too coarse for an English audience. Barrington praises him highly, but admits that "in the higher class of Irish characters he . . . did not exhibit sufficient dignity."

"He might have alluded to the actual perpetration of violence the most *brutal* in one *particular instance*, the scene of which (like the field of the forty steps) is still pointed out with strong *shudders*, near Limerick, as having sullied a spirit every way amiable and fixed its fate in life far, far indeed below the level of either its GENIUS or its VIRTUES. It will here be asked, why were not the violated laws appealed to and the ruffian gibbeted for his atrocity? The answer must be that the Irish gentleman of 1782 considered himself beyond their reach. His victim was young and poor, and embarrassed with the parents who should have protected *her*. Who could have believed in the virtuous resistance of an actress?* I will proceed no further."

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* The *Public and Private Life* actually states that "the mother of our heroine having been attacked by a dangerous fit of illness, physical aid was resorted to, when the feeling daughter having exhausted all the pecuniary means her slender salary afforded, had been compelled under existing exigencies to procure a loan from the manager, who immediately complied, not actuated by feelings of commiseration for the afflicted mother and her child, but under the dastardly idea of thereby placing within his power the object of his base desires."

The whole truth about this sordid episode is beyond discovery. The lady's subsequent connection with Ford might incline the cynical to doubt "the virtuous resistance of an actress" in 1782 and reject the story (given more explicitly in the *Public and Private Life*) of her forcible abduction to the house of a dependent of Daly's and her ruin there. But her flight from Ireland, almost penniless, and Daly's malevolent attempt to persecute her in England, on the plea of her breach of contract, certainly go to confirm the version of the story accepted by her early biographers.

Herbert, it is worthy of note, says nothing of Daly's infamy, which strengthens the suspicion that he himself was less well acquainted with Miss Francis than he claims to be.

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* We are reminded of some verses written upon Mrs. Pasqualino when she retired from the profession :

"Mature in judgement, far above her age,
And what's more wondrous, virtuous on the stage."

CHAPTER IV

DOROTHY BLAND BECOMES MRS. JORDAN

IT was in the summer of 1782 that Richard Daly's victim broke away from his clutches and, disregarding her contract with him, spent most of the money which she had left on a passage to Liverpool for herself, her mother, a younger sister, and the brother who was afterwards, through her influence, to follow her on to the stage. From Liverpool the fugitives made their way to Leeds. This latter step would seem to have been taken by the advice of the mother, who had an old acquaintance in Tate Wilkinson, manager of the York Company, one of the best known and most successful touring bodies of the day. We have heard of Wilkinson playing Othello at Smock Alley in 1758 to the Desdemona of the then Miss Grace Phillips. Since that period he had, after a few seasons in London, definitely taken up the career of a provincial manager. He was lucky in gaining the regard of a certain Joseph Baker, proprietor of the York Theatre, who took him into partnership and

From a picture drawn and engraved by J. Condé, 1794.

MRS. JORDAN.

[*Facing p.* 44.

on his death left him in sole possession of the theatres at York, Hull, and Newcastle. Wilkinson bought patents for the hitherto unlicensed houses at York and Hull; Newcastle he abandoned in favour of a new house at Leeds. By the time when he reappears in this story his company was firmly established among Yorkshire audiences and made occasional excursions further afield.

The meeting at Leeds of the Bland family and Wilkinson was fortunate alike for the future Mrs. Jordan and for her biographers, since not only did Wilkinson give her her introduction to the English stage but also he recorded in his garrulous, whimsical manner how she arrived in Leeds and came to him one morning in search of an engagement. She started upon him, he says in *The Wandering Patentee*, in July, 1782, with her mother, brother, and sister, all hand in hand. They came to him at his inn, not so well accoutred as he could have wished for their sakes or his own—" destitute of habiliments, . . . deplorable, in a strange country, without money, friends, acquaintance, or any possibility of credit." He recognised his first Desdemona in Dublin twenty-four years ago, and remembered her sister Miss M. Phillips, who had acted under his management in the York Company in the interval. It was Mrs. Bland who opened the attack.

" The mamma, like other mammas, and in particular actresses' mammas, talked so fulsomely of her daughter's merits that I was almost disgusted and very near giving a flat denial to any negotiation. Knowing the disagreeable weight of a large family, which with moderate talents, I feared, even with economy the young lady would not by any means be able to support, I resolved (like being asked to give bail) to be decisive with a negative. . . . But . . . I withdrew for half an hour, to reflect on what I should do, fearing a scrape from such a loaded connection and not the least trait of comic powers in the features or manner of the young lady; indeed quite the reverse, dejected, melancholy, tears in the eyes, and a languor that without the help of words pleaded wonderfully for assistance."

On his return to the inn Wilkinson asked the applicant for an engagement to recite something for him. She showed signs of reluctance, whereon he kindly promised her a trial on the stage and called for a bottle of Madeira. Over this they talked about Dublin until she felt in a more cheerful mood and consented to speak some of Callista's lines in Rowe's *Fair Penitent;* he had suggested Callista (one of her aunt's parts, by the way) for her trial performance a few days later. "At the tones of her voice I felt inwardly surprised and delighted, could not repress my hopes and my compliments, assured her I was lucky in such an acquisition. She, on her part, said if she could but please me she did not fear the audience." And so, flattering one another in turn, at length they "really found a sudden impulse of regard and parted that noon with mutual good wishes and assurances."

Wilkinson does not mention in this account of the interview a question and answer which became famous after Mrs. Jordan attained to celebrity. She herself is the authority for their utterance, and Boaden records them thus. Having brought the manager and his suppliant face to face he continues:

"He asked her laconically whether her line was tragedy, comedy, or opera. To which, in one word, she answered, 'ALL.' When telling her story afterwards, she always said at this point of it, 'Sir, in my life I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished!'"

We might have expected the brave word "All" after rather than before the production of the bottle of Madeira, and it is rather curious that "the elderly gentleman"—he was only forty-three—does not allude to his astonishment or its cause. However, we need not doubt the accuracy of Mrs. Jordan's memory. Wilkinson naturally sees himself in the centre of the stage in the little comedy at the inn and forgets his interlocutor's brief but most telling speech.

On July 11th the coming Queen of Comedy duly made her first appearance before an English audience at Leeds. Wilkinson had billed *The Fair Penitent* with Miss Bland in the part of Callista, but before the bills were issued was begged by her mother to alter the name from Bland to Francis. He was also prevailed upon to state that after the play Miss Francis would sing *The Woodland Laddie*.

"I do assure the reader," he writes, "without any flattery to the lady, though I did expect a degree of merit, yet the melody of voice which, increased by the repeated applause given (for the audience had not any sort of expectation) that I was not only charmed, but the public also*—and still more at what I feared would spoil the whole, the absurdity of Callista after her death jumping forth and singing a ballad; but on she came, in a frock and a little mob-cap, and sung the song with such effect that I was fascinated—for managers do not always meet with jewels, but when they do and think the sale will turn out for their own advantage you can conceive, reader, how it makes our eyes sparkle."

Wilkinson has previously admitted that his company was at the time in great need of being strengthened and that he was reduced to the expedient of poaching players from other managers, so that we can easily understand his delight over his lucky find.

Such was the success of the young actress on this first night at Leeds that, before the company left the town, the performance was repeated on August 5th for her benefit, and it was decided that she should be seen as Callista at York, where Wilkinson and his followers, reinforced by a number of new actors and actresses, were due to play during the race-week.

At the York Theatre she accordingly appeared, and not only in *The Fair Penitent*, but in the other plays of Wilkinson's repertory. She had signed articles for three years before the removal from Leeds and was now a regular member of the company. According to the common account,* her salary to begin with was only fifteen shillings a week. How she contrived to maintain on this both her mother and herself—not to speak of her brother, of whose departure there is no record, and her sister—we are left to imagine. A family bereavement, it is true, brought her some advantage with it. The aunt with whom we have met under the name of Miss M. Phillips was on her death-bed at York when the company arrived. Wilkinson says: "That lady had ever prided herself on family honours, being sprung from the Ap-Griffiths's, the Winny's and the Aprices of Wales; she was not destitute of good qualities but had let a fatal error [he appears to mean drinking] sap her health. She sent earnestly to see her sister and to embrace her dear niece, whom she then pronounced an honour to the blood of the Ap-Philips's; and as she had plenty of clothes and linen (at the pawnbroker's) she bequeathed them to her beloved niece (which, under the rose, was not at that time by any means unacceptable), and the generous aunt expired the week following, who once esteemed herself the greatest actress on any stage."

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* The grammar of this passage is decidedly Wilkinsonian; in his treatment of the English language Tate did little credit to his father the Rev. John, D.D., chaplain to Frederick, Prince of Wales, and to the Savoy Chapel. With regard to the success of the song, Boaden says that "the volunteer unaccompanied ballad of Mrs. Jordan was peculiar to her and charmed only by *her* voice and manner."

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* *Public and Private Life of Mrs. Jordan*, p. 6. The author adds that one guinea was "the highest sum given to any performer of that Thespian band." Similarly in *The Secret History of the Green Rooms* the original salary promised is said to have been only fifteen shillings a week, which, after the successful first appearance in *The Fair Penitent*, was doubled to "one pound ten per week—the highest salary in that company." Wilkinson omits any reference to the original fifteen shillings. See p. 55 below.

This sneering allusion to one whom he had at Dublin considered, if "of a conceited turn, at least sensible and well educated,"* and later had thought worthy of engagement in his own company, does not tend to exalt our opinion of the kind-heartedness of the man called by Oxberry "the only good fellow among all the managers we have ever heard of"; and it is curious he does not see that the acceptability of Miss Phillips's pawned wardrobe to her niece reflects somewhat upon himself, who engaged that niece at a very small sum a week. Still, had Wilkinson lived in more modern times, he would doubtless have said that he was not in the business for his health, and he appears to have no suspicion that he acted otherwise than liberally towards our heroine. In one of the apostrophes with which he is fond of adorning his narrative he exclaims: "But now, dear Mrs. Jordan, you do like the cash, and I do believe and hope you take care of it. That you love to receive it I know, and so does every other manager; you *have* made us know that. You will excuse my being jocular."†

Fortunately there is evidence to contradict the impression, which this passage is calculated to convey, that Mrs. Jordan was inclined to avarice. If she grasped at money, now or later, it was because of the unfair burden (voluntarily taken upon herself, it is true) of an ever increasing band of dependants, who were ready to take whatever she was prepared to give. Wilkinson was well aware of this, as he admits more than once, and might therefore have spared his "jocularity."

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* So he says in his *Memoirs*, speaking of the season 1757-8 at Smock Alley. He also admits that she played one leading part there better than any other actress he ever saw attempt it. When he met her again at York in 1763 he found her "in great esteem with many genteel persons" in the neighbourhood, from which we may infer that the report of her good breeding was not unfounded.

† Similarly in his *Memoirs* he says that he is "compelled, as Mr. Manager, to declare . . . that Mrs. Jordan, at making a bargain, is too many for the cunningest devil of us all."

At the beginning of the York engagement the decision was taken to adopt the pseudonym destined to be associated with such triumphs and such misfortunes. The manager had already, as at Leeds, ordered the play-bills for *The Fair Penitent*, this time with Miss "Francis" as the representative of Callista, when he received a note from Mrs. Bland stating that (for very particular reasons, which she would explain) the name of Francis must be changed and some other adopted. She would not consent to that of Bland being used, "as that name in the prints might probably much injure her in the opinion of her father's relations." Wilkinson and Mrs. Bland then had an interview and, "the matter being explained, there appeared obvious and pressing reasons for such a change of name; Jordan was adopted, and a good name it has proved for her credit and will be remembered with the tribute of honour to her undoubted excellent talents while the stage is permitted any share in history or conversation."

Wilkinson continues as if he had explained why "Mrs. Jordan" was selected now as a veil for the identity of the actress,* when as a matter of fact he has only hinted at the reason for the "Mrs.," which can be guessed by those who have heard of the conduct of Richard Daly. Outside the pages of *The Wandering Patentee*, however, Wilkinson claimed the suggestion of "Jordan" himself. John Bernard the actor, whose *Retrospections of the Stage* were published in 1830, after his death, says concerning the change of name from Bland, or rather Francis, to Jordan:

"As I had never heard that Miss Bland was married, I afterwards inquired of Wilkinson the cause, and he replied, 'Her name? Why, God bless you, my boy! I gave her that name—I was her sponsor.' 'You?' 'Yes, when she thought of going to London, she thought Miss sounded insignificant, so she asked me to advise her a name. Why, said I, my dear, you have crossed the water, so I'll call you Jordan; and, by the memory of Sam! if she didn't take my joke in earnest and call herself Mrs. Jordan ever since.' That was Tate's story; but, as it was told in his usually ambiguous way, my reader may attach what credence to it he pleases."

We seem to hear the very accents of the travelling manager in this reported conversation; but that, of course, is no warrant for the truth of his explanation, and we must, with Bernard, leave the reader to attach what credence he pleases to it. Whatever the origin of the name, however, it was as Mrs. Jordan that Dorothy Bland was henceforward known to the world; though, we shall see, at one period she adopted yet another style when off the stage.

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* "So many various stories have been told and printed, I have judged it neither offensive or wrong on Mrs. Jordan's account . . . to give the fact as it really was"; and he proceeds to relate the death of Miss M. Phillips as if it helped to make things plain. Truly Bernard is justified in speaking of "Tate's usually ambiguous way." It will be noted there that the change of name is wrongly attributed to the time when Mrs. Jordan left for London.

From Wilkinson's disjointed account it may be gathered that Mrs. Jordan's appearances during the race-week were as Callista in *The Fair Penitent;* as Rutland in *The Earl of Essex;* as Priscilla Tomboy in *The Romp;* and as Arionelli in *The Son-in-Law.* The last-named was not her first male impersonation, as we know, and it made a great hit. She did not resemble Mrs. Siddons in her prudery about adopting realistic male costume* or insist, like her, on wearing what the critics called "nondescript garments of uncertain sex."

In the case of Mrs. Jordan, on the contrary, "the neatness of her figure in the male attire was for years remarkable," according to Boaden, who adds quaintly: "But the attraction after all is purely feminine, and the display of female, not male perfections. Did the lady really look like a man, the coarse *androgynus* would be hooted from the stage." In other words, an actress is only justified in undertaking male characters (Boaden is not referring in this passage to such parts as Rosalind), when she looks obviously female. This is a doctrine which is evidently the firm belief of the operatic and musical comedy* managers—and therefore, presumably, of the audiences—of to-day, when the artistic heresy of the assignment of male rôles to female performers is so rife; for a "good leg" and a certain *embonpoint* appear the chief requisites of the male impersonator.

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* Genest says of Mrs. Siddons in *As You Like It* that she "contrived a dress for Rosalind which was neither male nor female. For this she was ridiculed in the papers, and very deservedly; she had it entirely at her option to act Rosalind or not to act Rosalind, but when she determined to act the part it was her duty to dress it properly."

Mrs. Jordan's assumption of the character of Arionelli at York caused a protest, but not upon artistic grounds, and not from the audience. In Wilkinson's company there was a player of the name of Tyler, a capable singer and actor, but a discontented man, who was accustomed to sustain this part in *The Son-in-Law*. When he found it taken away from him and assigned to Mrs. Jordan, he promptly gave Wilkinson notice and left, "to warble Arionelli at Scarborough" under another manager.

Professional jealousy, as might have been expected, made itself felt against the newcomer from other members of the York Company—her fellow-actresses, to wit. She was a success in all that she played during race-week; and among the audience which saw her on the night when she played Rutland and Priscilla Tomboy was William Smith, the Drury Lane actor, who so fully shared the opinion of the house as to Mrs. Jordan's merits that he made a point of coming to see every performance in which she took part while he was in York. Smith—than whom Genest assures us that "no actor was ever more completely the Gentleman," and who indeed was known among his comrades as "Gentleman Smith"—had long been a popular favourite at Drury Lane, and his verdict in consequence was of no little weight. Wilkinson confesses that Smith's remarks to him made him secretly rejoice that Mrs. Jordan was under articles to him, and that he "felt less alarmed at whatever flourishes Mr. Smith might give in London, on his arrival, relative to my new theatrical acquisition."

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* I might have added "and pantomime," but that Drury Lane has recently shown some signs of artistic repentance which are lacking still at Covent Garden!

The articles, according to Wilkinson, gave Mrs. Jordan "the first terms, also an extraordinary benefit after York race-week." He does not here specify what the first terms amounted to, but in his *Memoirs*, speaking of her single appearance at Leeds in the summer of 1786, he says that four years ago she played at York for £1 11*s*. 6*d*. a week, which is more than double what the anonymous biographer already alluded to makes her receive at the beginning. With regard to the benefit, it looks as if Wilkinson realised that he was not overpaying his "jewel." But to certain of his followers the matter did not appear in the same light. In particular, it aroused the anger of his leading lady, a Mrs. Smith, who had come to him originally with her husband from Dublin and had established herself in the good graces of the towns which the company visited. When she heard of the forthcoming benefit for Mrs. Jordan, "Mrs. Smith swelled with indignation, and the constant green-room phrase was, 'Pray when, ma'am, is your benefit? and when is yours, for I see Mrs. Jordan begins with one on Wednesday next?'"

But for his personal support, Wilkinson claims, the malignity of those who persisted in attributing her success not to her merits but to his partiality would have been too much for the young beneficiary. Her spirits were never violent, he says, "unless when scolding the manager and with an empty pocket." Of this lack of the high spirits which the multitude is apt to attribute to the comedian off the stage as well as on, we shall hear again later. But indeed, at the moment, even the most unthinking could scarcely expect Mrs. Jordan to overflow with gaiety. She had pleased the public, it is true; also her manager and so discerning a critic as "Gentleman" Smith. This result was achieved, however, at the cost of hard study (as Wilkinson bears witness) at a period when study was irksome. For now the event was approaching on account of which her mother had insisted on her adoption of the style of a married woman. How much, if any, of her story was known to her rivals cannot be said; but they had at least eyes. They had tongues, too, and did not fail to use them. It was therefore very necessary for the manager to protect her as far as he could. It would appear that she was indisposed during part of the stay at York, though the infant seems not to have arrived until about the beginning of December. Wilkinson mentions his introduction to her of Cornelius Swan, the local critic, who was admitted to her little bedchamber at York, where, "by the side of the bed, with Mrs. Bland's old red cloak round his neck, he would sit and instruct his pupil in Hill's character of Zara."

Swan, we are told by Boaden, was a man with the very demon of tuition in him and did not hesitate to tease even the great Garrick with his ideas as to how the part of Othello should be played. He took a fancy to Mrs. Jordan now and declared that he adopted her as a daughter. Wilkinson complains that, in spite of this, Swan did not prove a fond parent, since at his death he did not leave her a shilling. But, if we are to believe the author of the *Public and Private Life*, Wilkinson is unjust. Swan may not have bequeathed anything to Mrs. Jordan at his death, but he did her a very great service with his money now while he was alive. Daly had refused to acquiesce in the defeat which he received when his victim broke her articles with him and fled. He traced her from Dublin to York* and sent to her two demands, one for damages amounting to £250 for breach of contract, and the other for repayment of his loans.

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* The "authentic memoirs" prefixed to *Jordan's Elixir of Life* make Daly, through one of his tools, write to Wilkinson warning him against the young actress when she first escaped from him, and induce him therefore to refuse her an interview at first. But there is no confirmation of this story, which is improbable, as implying that Daly knew of his victim's intention to give him the slip. Of course Daly would not have been above such methods. Mrs. Siddons, as well as Mrs. Jordan, had experience of his evil character. Engaged by him for a season at Dublin in 1783, she soon quarrelled with him. She herself attributed his spite to her refusal of his advances, and writes in one of her letters that he "made me suffer . . . by employing all the newspapers to abuse and annoy me the whole time I remained in Dublin, and to pursue me to England with malignant scandal."

He threatened immediate arrest unless she returned to Ireland and completed her contract with him. Naturally the poor girl could see no escape. But Swan came forward and paid down the £250 and what Daly claimed, in addition, that he had lent. If these were the facts of the case, then the author of the *Life* is surely right, as against Wilkinson, in hailing Swan as "a sincere and disinterested friend."

Apart from the question of aid against the machinations of Daly, Swan's acquaintance with Mrs. Jordan was not without profit to her, for he is credited in *The Wandering Patentee*, if not with generosity, at least with understanding, and he certainly took pains to train her talents. He urged Wilkinson to revive *Zara*, in order to let her show her ability in the title-rôle. "Really, Wilkinson," he said, "I have given the Jordan but three lessons, and she is so adroit at receiving my instructions that I declare she repeats the character as well as Mrs. Cibber ever did; nay, let me do the Jordan justice, for I do not exceed when with truth I declare, Jordan speaks it as well as I could myself."

When the York engagement, with Mrs. Jordan's benefit (about which we hear no details), was over, the company proceeded on a tour about the county. First Wakefield, then Doncaster, and then Sheffield were visited. At Doncaster the leading lady was compelled, in circumstances to be referred to in the next chapter, to relinquish her parts for a time, and Mrs. Jordan was given the opportunity of playing "Emmeline, Lady Racket, Lady Bell, Lady Teazle, Lady Alton, Indiana, etc., the termed property of Mrs. Smith," Wilkinson says. This good fortune continued for most of the stay at Sheffield, and was fully utilised by the ambitious girl, who is described by her manager as studying all those characters from play-night to play-night, while still continuing in the farces and playing in all with unremitting zeal. While she was thus busy, her career was nearly cut short at the Sheffield Theatre on October 18th. She was representing on that night the chambermaid to Knight's footman in a new opera, called *The Fair American* and seen for the first time at Drury Lane in the previous spring. The two were sitting at tea upon the stage, when suddenly a heavy curtain-scene, with a roller of immense weight, dropped at their feet. Had it fallen upon their heads—or anyone's except his own, Wilkinson suggests—it must have caused immediate death.

The Sheffield engagement did not repay the York company, for the houses seldom brought in over £12 a night, Wilkinson's benefit amounted to £35, and Mrs. Jordan's, "though patronised, was very indifferent." She had the fortune, however, to attract the attention of the Duke of Norfolk,* who predicted her rise and became an honourable friend to her, according to Wilkinson, from that time onward. He was captivated, it appears, by her performance of Miss Juniper in *Summer Amusement*, and particularly by her song:

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* Charles Howard, eleventh Duke, at this time still only Earl of Surrey. He was the celebrated "Jockey of Norfolk" ("*Jockey of Norfolk*," states a paragraph in the *Morning Post* of October 17th, 1786, "is very active at Hereford and throughout the country, shaking butchers by the hand, boozing with cobblers, and kissing their wives"), a convivial person, who is said to have had such an objection to washing himself that his servants used to perform the operation for him when he was incapacitated by drink. It is of him that Thackeray tells the story of the Prince Regent's invitation to dinner at Brighton. Norfolk was then an old man, and the Prince with the help of his brothers York and Clarence succeeded in making him hopelessly intoxicated.

> "Let not love thy heart ensnare;
> All its joys are tinged with care,
> Fleeting pleasures, lasting pain,
> Smiles that ne'er return again."*

From Sheffield the company went at the beginning of November to Hull, and it was here, in the same month or early December, that there took place the birth of Mrs. Jordan's eldest child, the daughter by Richard Daly, who was destined one day to heap upon her mother, not altogether wilfully, more sorrows than the wicked Daly himself brought upon her at the commencement of her career. The infant was given the christian name of Frances, and up to the time of her marriage in 1801 seems to have been known as Miss Jordan, though she may have passed for a time as Miss Ford, like her half-sisters Lucy and Dora, who had more right to the name.

We see the young actress, therefore, at the age of twenty, burdened with an illegitimate child and condemned to struggle for the maintenance of this, as well as of the helpless Mrs. Bland, on what she earned in the Yorkshire theatres. Of the brother nothing more is heard for another four years. The sister, who appears to have clung to her throughout life, may possibly have earned a little; she is

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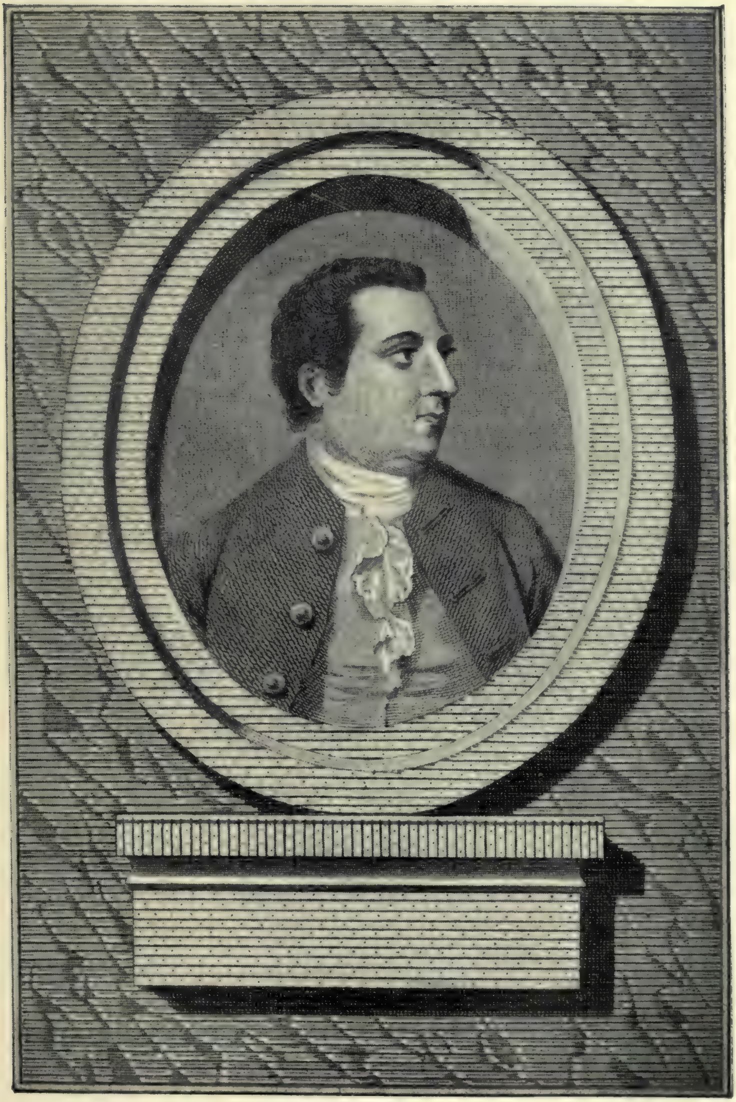
* *Jordan's Elixir.*



From an old print.

CHARLES HOWARD, ELEVENTH DUKE OF NORFOLK.

[*Facing p.* 60.

not known to have acted. But even three lives would be a heavy charge upon Mrs. Jordan's income, though she might be getting a guinea and a half per week and a benefit in each of the towns visited. To set against these hardships, she had some undoubted success on the provincial stage, two or three good friends, and an assurance that she would go far if she persevered.

CHAPTER V

THE YORK COMPANY'S "TREASURE"

OWING to the birth of her child, Mrs. Jordan was unable to make her first appearance at the Hull Theatre until the evening following Christmas Day, 1782. For her introduction to the new audience the bill was chosen in which she had charmed Leeds and York. She was announced to play Callista in *The Fair Penitent* and then to sing *The Woodland Laddie* ("To the green wood gang wi' me"). Unhappily her enemies had taken the opportunity of her indisposition to work up a cabal against her. They had let the ladies of Hull into the secret of her disgrace, as far as they knew it themselves. Mrs. Smith, we may be sure, had been foremost in engineering the campaign. She had a new reason for hatred of her junior in the company. While on the tour she had been herself in expectation of a child, in lawful wedlock, about the end of September, but in terror that her characters would be given to Mrs. Jordan in her absence, she had insisted on acting almost to the very last. Compelled by her bodily state to give way and let Mrs. Jordan play lead at Doncaster, she was the more determined after her expectation had there been fulfilled to return to the stage at Sheffield, and accordingly rose too early from her bed in preparation for the journey, caught a chill while walking in a wet garden, and lamed herself. Nevertheless she persisted in her intention of acting at Sheffield—despite, or rather because of, her manager's assurance that "Jordan was ready"—appeared for one night, and then collapsed for three weeks. Mrs. Jordan was not in a condition to take her place again for long and herself retired from public view at Hull, Wilkinson thus being deprived temporarily of the services of his two chief actresses at one and the same time; but Mrs. Smith none the less bore a heavier grudge than ever against her rival on account of what had occurred. She reappeared in the company ten days before the other and set to work to prepare a demonstration of unwelcome nature for her on her return. With the assistance of her sympathizers she spread injurious reports abroad, in consequence of which Mrs. Jordan, finding her Callista* coolly received at the start, played it without her usual spirit. When she came on afterwards to sing *The*

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* Boaden says that "there was a cold and sarcastic application of the character of the heroine to the performer among the ladies, which chilled the actress and rendered the scene languid." Callista's character does not strike the unprejudiced reader as at all resembling Mrs. Jordan's. Hazlitt says of her, in a criticism of *The Fair Penitent*, that she is "a heroine, a virago, fair, a woman of high spirit and violent resolutions, anything but a penitent. She dies indeed at last, not from remorse for her vices, but because she can no longer gratify them. She has not the slightest regard for her virtue, and not much for her reputation."

Woodland Laddie she made a brave effort and acquitted herself well, but instead of being applauded she was actually hissed.

Morality was thus avenged—not for the only time, in Mrs. Jordan's experience, after this fashion—while spite was gratified. But neither the moralists nor the malignants could triumph long against the charm and talent of the comedian. Better acquaintance with her converted the Hull audiences, and she was in the end enabled to take her full share in the success of the York Company's season in the town.

Wilkinson remarks that a little pique and jealousy among the ladies of his party was wont to prevent indisposition and make them do their best. But he also shows that, carried to such lengths as it was against Mrs. Jordan, this jealousy caused him no small trouble. He gives another instance of the annoyances to which she was subjected, apparently about the same period. He had taken into his company a Mrs. Ward, niece of the better-known Mrs. Bland (Hamilton or Sweeny), who, being "not handsome but well made," was ambitious of displaying herself in the breeches-parts appropriated by Mrs. Jordan, and in consequence hated her whom she wished to supplant. She conceived the idea of sitting at the stage-doors with a group of friends to guy her and prevent her doing herself justice. Mrs. Jordan, "whether from a mind being hurt really at such insult or by way of secret revenge on her rival, would frequently have her eyes so squeezed and red and have the little dropbeads trickle on her first appearance, so as to impede her speech, as often caused enquiry whether Mrs. Jordan was ill or what could possibly be the matter." The manager, however, thought it right to preserve her from the necessity of recourse to such artifices and gave orders for the stage-doors to be padlocked, which defeated the plotters and made them see that he was aware of their ill-conduct.

Wilkinson says that Mrs. Jordan, when she got a proper opportunity for retaliation, was not so little of a woman as not to retort upon an avowed enemy. But she appears to have been singularly free, on the whole, from the pettiest vice of her profession, and it is only perhaps in the case of Mrs. Robinson, to which we shall come later, that she allowed herself to behave in the spiteful manner in which many of her sisters on the stage behaved toward her. With regard to young aspirants, on the contrary, her conduct was kind, and very different from the treatment which she received when she was but a struggling beginner.

This book is not intended to be a full record of Mrs. Jordan's stage career, and therefore no attempt will be made to follow in detail her professional experiences with the York Company down to the time when she quitted it to go to Drury Lane. The details may be found set out in a rambling, disjointed fashion in the reminiscences of her manager and in a more orderly, if also rather discursive manner by her biographer Boaden. Here it may suffice to say that the wanderings of the company were much the same in 1783 and the two following years as in 1782. In the course of them Mrs. Jordan added various characters to her repertory, two notable successes being William in the opera of *Rosina* and Patrick in *The Poor Soldier*. The latter is recorded to have been played seventy-five times by her at York, her songs making a great hit, especially that which begins:

"How happy the soldier who lives on his pay
And spends half-a-crown out of sixpence a day!
Yet fears neither justices, warrants or bums,
But pays all his debts with the roll of his drums.
With a row-de-dow," &c.

During this period she made the acquaintance of many well-known actors and actresses who joined Wilkinson's band at one time or another. Among those with whom she was thus brought into contact were Elizabeth Kemble; Mrs. Baddeley, now near the miserable end of her career; Rosoman Wilkinson,* the future Mrs. Mountain of Covent Garden; Mrs. Brown; Henderson (for the second time); Dignum; and Richard and Mrs. Yates. All the while she continued to be the strongest card in her manager's hand, both at York and on tour, as he freely admits, and it was not until the spring of 1785 that she began to show signs of discontent with her position.

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* No relation to Tate Wilkinson. The latter records that Mrs. Jordan "kindly stepped forth to give her helping hand," when Rosoman Wilkinson came to him at Hull at the end of 1784 and asked him to engage her in the York Company. Her family were circus performers, and she herself less than two years previously had appeared in the "Royal Circus and Equestrian Philharmonic Academy," St. George's Fields (afterwards the Surrey Theatre), in a burletta acted by children, pupils of Charles Dibdin. Her father and mother were in poor circumstances when, now fifteen or sixteen, she made her appeal to Tate Wilkinson.

He did not think he had room for her—"my company being loaded, and my lady singers tenacious, and Mrs. Jordan so undoubtedly clever, and as universal as clever"—but got up a benefit for her, to which Mrs. Jordan contributed her services. Rosoman herself was given an opportunity of appearing at the Hull Theatre once or twice, and did so well that an engagement followed. When Mrs. Jordan left for London next year, Miss Wilkinson had the reversion of her parts.

The reason, no doubt, was that the third year of her articles was now half-way through, and that she had more ambitious plans in view than playing continually in Yorkshire at thirty-one and sixpence a week. Whether or not she had corresponded with "Gentleman" Smith since he saw her during the race-week of 1782, she now received an offer to appear at Drury Lane in the autumn, and Wilkinson believes that Smith was the principal agent in securing it for her. She accepted it, and thereafter her interest in her present work declined. She grew careless and inattentive, according to *The Wandering Patentee*, and was very often really or fictitiously ill. On one April night at York, when she was due to appear at a benefit performance, to sing a song after the tragedy which formed the first half of the bill, and then to play in *The Poor Soldier*, she refused to come on for the song, declaring that she was indisposed. "Those who know Mrs. Jordan must know that she is very obstinate; she may be led, but will not be driven on the stage or off, unless when she is in the humour." However she was in the house, and the audience, aware of this, insisted on hearing her and would have nothing else. Wilkinson suggests that the knowledge that her own benefit had yet to come determined her to give way. She appeared before the curtain, already dressed as Patrick and very pale, pleaded illness, and then fainted. But even this was of no avail, and so at last the song was sung.

With thoughts of her London engagement running in her head, it was perhaps natural that Mrs. Jordan should relax her efforts. Yet, had she not the contract safely in her possession, she would have been very unwise to let herself be seen below her best. Several unfavourable impressions were formed of her theatrical abilities at this period, which might otherwise have done her harm in her profession. Richard Yates, the well known Drury Lane and Covent Garden actor, accompanying from Edinburgh his wife, the still more celebrated Mrs. M. A. Yates, to whose success he had contributed so much,* stopped at York while his wife gave one performance—her last but one on any stage—for Wilkinson. In the farce, *Cymon*, played that evening after the tragedy of *The Earl of Warwick*, which Mrs. Yates had selected, Mrs. Jordan appeared as Fatima and was pronounced by Richard Yates to be "merely a piece of theatrical mediocrity" and much inferior to both Miss Wilkinson and Mrs. Brown.

Yates's opinion was endorsed by some of the other sex, though in their case it may be surmised that jealousy had an influence upon the verdict.

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* Yates should not have been a harsh critic of beginners. Miss Graham before she married him was an indifferent performer. According to the *Thespian Dictionary* she once played, presumably in London, to an audience of four in the boxes, seventy in the upper boxes, eighteen in the pit, and about a hundred in the galleries. Under his tuition, after their marriage, she advanced so much that on Mrs. Cibber's death in 1766 she had not a rival on the English stage.

This was certainly so with Mrs. Robinson, "the Siddons of Manchester," as Wilkinson calls her. She entered the York Company in the summer of 1785 and coveted the breeches-parts played by Mrs. Jordan, having indeed a figure neat to a degree of perfection, we are told, and being the best Mrs. Brady (in *The Irish Widow*) in Wilkinson's experience. Having seen Mrs. Jordan, she informed her manager that she could not discover in her the merit he claimed, nor indeed any beyond a small share of mediocrity. "I think I possess some judgement," she said, "and venture to pronounce that, when you lose your Great Treasure in the autumn and it goes to London, it will soon be turned back again upon your hands and be glad to come if you will accept it!"

It is true that on the second night of Mrs. Robinson's appearance at Leeds Mrs. Bland had adopted the former ruse of her daughter's enemies and had seated herself ostentatiously at the stage-door while Mrs. Robinson was on the stage. She frequently took hold of Wilkinson by the hand or coat, "clapping her apron before her eyes and begging, as an act of kindness, I would inform her when that fright had done acting and speaking, for it was so horrid she could not look at her." Mrs. Jordan herself seems to have refrained from any hostile action for the present; her opportunity came later.

The Siddons of Manchester was clearly biassed; but the real Siddons also joined in the condemnation of Mrs. Jordan. She was at York during the August race-week and came to see the company at the theatre on the last night. *The Poor Soldier* was the farce for the occasion; and, having witnessed it, "Mrs. Siddons seemed to think Mrs. Jordan was better where she was than to venture on the London boards."

Was this a genuine expression of opinion? Wilkinson himself states that his Great Treasure had grown so careless that her fame was on the decrease in Yorkshire that summer. But Sarah Siddons was not noted for her leniency towards possible rivals, and she had no doubt heard enough of Mrs. Jordan to fear a counter-attraction to herself at Drury Lane. Moreover, Mrs. Jordan was seven or eight years younger than herself, and, if inferior to her in beauty, certainly not inferior in charm. It would be interesting to know what was Mrs. Siddons's view two years later as to the wisdom of Mrs. Jordan in coming to town.*

After a second week at York the company moved to Wakefield, and here on September 9th Mrs. Jordan played for the last time under her contract with Wilkinson, making her farewell with *The Poor Soldier*. The guinea-and-a-half-per-week period of her existence was over. When next Yorkshire saw her it was on very different terms that the pleasure of her services was secured.

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* Boaden justly points out that Woodfall (in turn actor, dramatic critic, parliamentary reporter, newspaper editor and proprietor) had once advised Mrs. Siddons that she should keep to small theatres in the country, where she could be heard, as she was too weak for the London stage!

CHAPTER VI

LONDON

ON Monday, October 18th, 1785, a puff preliminary in the *Morning Post* said: "The friends of the new Actress, who is to appear to-night for the first time, entertain not the most distant apprehension of a failure. From the report of the best judges who have seen her, there is not a possibility that the audience will wish the *Jordan* of Old Drury at *Jericho*."

We are told by Boaden that Mrs. Jordan had set off for London with no great cheer of mind; "for she was never sanguine, nor did the long experience of her popularity ever completely divert her of alarm." Possibly the "opening of trenches with a paragraph in the *Morning Post*" was accomplished for her by Gentleman Smith. He had to justify the encomium which led to her engagement at a salary of £4 a week, and would naturally wish to put a good heart into her on her first appearance at Drury Lane. From what we know of Mrs. Jordan, however, if she was diffident before a performance, stage-fright was not a malady from which she suffered. We shall, indeed, before long find that to some she seemed to have, if anything, an excess of confidence when once on the boards. On this first night at a London theatre there is no hint of nervousness on her part, to judge from contemporary accounts. We cannot do better than quote two of the notices which Mrs. Jordan must have had the pleasure of reading on the day following her *début* at Drury Lane.

The critic of the *Morning Post* signs himself on this occasion "Duncan." If his is the same hand which penned her later notices in the paper, he was a man with a high opinion of the importance of his own functions, and expected the players to give respectful attention to his advice. On the present occasion he was in a very amiable mood.

"The Comedy of *The Country Girl*," he writes, "was last night revived for the purpose of introducing Mrs. Jordan to a London audience. The Managers of the two Theatres seem now to be actuated by a spirit of emulation, and are resolved to gratify the curiosity of the public with as much novelty as possible. . . . Mrs. Jordan gave convincing proofs that she possesses the essential qualities requisite for the character which was allotted to her. She acted and looked the Country Girl with a judgement and discrimination superior to any other performer on the stage. Nature has endowed her with talents sufficient to combat and excel her competitors in the same walk. Her person and manner are adapted for representing the peculiarities of youthful innocence and frivolity. The author has blended in the character an affected simplicity with a commendable discernment; and Mrs. Jordan pourtrayed his ideas with a vivacity and colouring that arrested the attention, and drew reiterated bursts of applause from a polite and crowded audience. . . . If we may be allowed to judge of the Lady's genius by the specimens given, she may be pronounced to be very far above mediocrity. Her person is rather of the middle size; her face more agreeable than handsome; and her features intelligent and impressive. Upon the whole, we congratulate the public on such a valuable acquisition, that will greatly contribute to the support of the comic muse, and give an importance to the dramatic exertions of Old Drury."

The notice in the *Morning Chronicle* on the same day, having mentioned that *The Country Girl* had been put on with the express purpose of introducing the new actress, continues:

"This lady, we understand, has been upon the stage some time, but came last from the York theatre. Her performance of yesterday evening fully justified her pretentions to preferment, and proves her right to rank among the most expert of her profession. She played the character of Margery [Peggy] admirably; and though we have seen the simplicity of manners of the Country Girl more naturally worn and exhibited, we scarcely remember to have been present when the part was given throughout with more archness, or supported with more spirit; neither do we recollect it to have produced a more powerful comick effect in the hands of any actress. Mrs. Jordan is short in her figure, but has a good voice, expressive features, great vivacity, and self-possession, and indeed a sufficient share of requisites to qualify her for the representation of any character in comedy in which it is not absolutely necessary that the actress should be a perfect beauty. On her first appearance on the stage she was welcomed with most encouraging plaudits, and not only received abundant applause in the course of the performance, but as continued a repetition of thundering peals of approbation after its conclusion as ever actress was honoured with."

There can scarcely be any doubt entertained, when we read these notices, that Mrs. Jordan made an instantaneous conquest of her new audience with *The Country Girl.* The play was repeated on October 24th* and again on October 28th, her performance for the third time causing the *Morning Post* to say that "undoubtedly this Lady will be a very valuable acquisition to Old Drury."

The choice of *The Country Girl* for her first presentation to London was a very wise step on the part of Mrs. Jordan and her managers, Sheridan and King. The credit of suggesting the play belongs to the actress herself, and her discrimination

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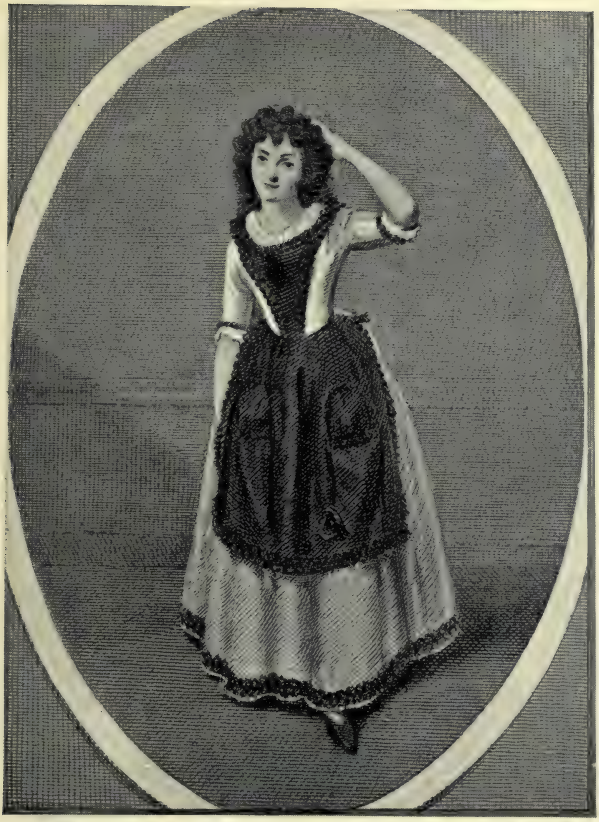
* It is curious that Genest should say (VI., 375): "Mrs. Jordan does not seem to have struck the audience very forcibly on the 1st night, as she did not repeat the character till the 24th." Mrs. Siddons and Miss Farren were the feminine stars of Drury Lane when Mrs. Jordan arrived there, and it was hardly to be expected that plays in which they—and especially the proud "Melpomene"—had been announced to appear should be shelved to allow a merely rising light to display herself out of her due turn.



From an engraving by W. Bromley after a painting by S. De Wilde, 1791.

MRS. JORDAN

as *Peggy* in "The Country Girl."

"Why do you marry me, then? 'tis the same thing, Bud."

[*Facing p.* 74.

is proved thereby. It was claimed by the admirers of Mrs. Brown, of whom we have already heard, that it was she who taught Mrs. Jordan how to play Peggy. Tate Wilkinson, however, who was in the best position to know the truth of the matter, does not allow this. Both actresses were in his company, and he says: "I do not think Mrs. Brown had a wish to give any instructions, nor the other lady the least inclination to have received them, had they been offered; each held the abilities of the other in the highest contempt, and there was no love lost between them." What happened was that *The Country Girl* was revived at York in 1785, so that Mrs. Brown might have an opportunity to play Peggy. This chastened version by Garrick of Wycherley's *Country Wife* had come to be considered rather obsolete—"acted but once these twelve years" in London, a Drury Lane playbill informs us in October—and Mrs. Jordan had never thought of it previously for herself. Seeing the impression made by it on the York audience, however, she determined to study the part of Peggy and play it at Drury Lane.* She never did a better stroke for herself.

Boaden attributes some of Mrs. Jordan's success in *The Country Girl* to a seeming coincidence in the ages of the actress and the character she represented. In Peggy's apology, at the end of the play, for deserting her Bud she is made to say:

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* "I do believe," Wilkinson admits, "that seeing Mrs. Brown play Peggy and several of the principal girls' characters was what luckily, I may say for her, drew her attention to such parts, which have turned out so greatly to her credit, fame, and rapid fortune; for the reader may observe that in the course of Mrs. Jordan's few seasons at York (*The Romp* excepted) she hardly ever appeared in such characters. . . . I had not a thought of its being possible for her to have succeeded to such a degree in the girls' characters." He had assigned to her "sentimental and gay ladies, chambermaids, opera parts and several breeches characters."

> 'Twas a sad life: and then he was near fifty!
> I'm but nineteen.

"Perhaps," remarks Boaden, "Mrs. Jordan looked rather more, not in her action, which was juvenile to the last, but the comic maturity of her expression seemed to announce a longer experience of life and of the stage than could have been attained at nineteen."

If the usually accepted date of Mrs. Jordan's birth be correct, she was about twenty-three when she first acted Peggy at Drury Lane. Four years, however, is a very small margin of difference between player and character upon the stage, and for such things spectators are always grateful. But it was not her mere youthfulness, nor yet her beauty, which no one ever declared pre-eminent, that made her famous either in *The Country Girl* or in any other piece in her repertory. It was "the Child of Nature" who animated Peggy and all her other best parts; and, whether or not this title was coined for her so early in her first London season, it was this point upon which the critics who saw her beginnings at Drury Lane were in general agreement. To supplement what we have quoted already from the *Post* and the *Chronicle*, we may give some remarks which appeared in the *Morning Herald* on October 26th, after she had been seen a second time:

"With respect to Mrs. Jordan, the reports of the different editors, though short, were full and discriminating; yet in no point were they inconsistent. All were equally favourable to her, none fulsome. She is universally allowed to possess a figure, small perhaps, but neat and elegant, as was remarkably conspicuous where she was dressed as a boy, in the third act. Her face, if not beautiful, is said by some to be pretty, and by some pleasing, intelligent, or impressive. Her voice, if not peculiarly sweet, is not harsh; if not strong, is clear and equal to the extent of the theatre. She has much archness and gave every point of the dialogue with the best comic effect. She is a perfect mistress of the *Jeu de Théâtre*, and improved to the uttermost all the ludicrous situations with which the *Country Girl* abounds. From such premises there is, and can be, but one conclusion, that she is a most valuable acquisition to the public stock of innocent entertainment."

Mrs. Jordan is reported to have gone to bed happy on the night of October 18th, loaded with congratulations from Smith and assured that she would not be long rated upon the treasurer's books at £4 a week. After her continued triumph in the *Country Girl* she actually received a rise of salary, perhaps to £8 weekly. She was to get more before the season closed, but even that figure was very handsome indeed for a newcomer. Mrs. Siddons had begun with £5 from Garrick in 1775. She wrote of herself in her *Reminiscences* later as "an actress well worth my poor five pounds a week";

but in the following season she had been compelled to take £3 in order to remain at Drury Lane. Her comic rival, therefore, was fortunate in being able to command at so early a stage in her engagement at the same theatre so much larger a sum. But her drawing power from the first was beyond question.

Among those who came to see Drury Lane's new discovery in her first London part were the young Prince of Wales, his uncle Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, and Lord North, the famous ex-Secretary of State. The Prince and the Duke were constant playgoers, as the newspapers did not fail to notice. One reference to their attendance on Mrs. Jordan's third night is an amusing example of the ordinary freedom of utterance claimed by the Press of the period. "The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cumberland are congenial souls," observes the *Morning Post.* "One night they declare their resolution of showing the world that *Appearance is against Them** ; and on another they are of opinion that they should visit the *Country Girl.* They conduct themselves with great propriety and condescension. The latter frequently acts the character of *Duke and No Duke*, and the former possesses the amiable qualities of *Harry the Fifth.*"

Mrs. Jordan had opened her attack on London audiences with one of her "romps." To follow this up, she exhibited herself next in Shakespeare, but in a part which did not interfere with the claims of the established actresses of the Drury Lane company—as Viola in *Twelfth Night.* Again the *Morning Post* critic was very favourable:

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* Mrs. Inchbald's comedy was played at Covent Garden on October 22nd.

"The reputation she had gained in *The Country Girl*," he wrote on November 12th, "made the eye of criticism particularly attentive to mark the extent of her powers, and estimate her real merit. From the more careful observation we are happy to pronounce that she more than equalled our expectations. Her conception of the character was just, and her performance natural and spirited. Her fear, perhaps, of appearing too comic led her sometimes into a mode of expression too deliberate and didactic. She met, however, with frequent and loud applause for the propriety and force with which she delivered many passages of our immortal bard. . . . Upon the whole we think she merited all the applause she gained; and hope she will continue to perform [the character] with undiminished reputation."

Twelfth Night was repeated on the 16th. The Prince of Wales was present on both occasions, and on the second "expressed the greatest satisfaction at Mrs. Jordan's performance." Other judges agreed with him and the *Morning Post.* The *Public Advertiser*, which had taken little notice of her hitherto, asks on November 12th: "Have a London audience ever been more entertained than by Mrs. Jordan, from the Theatre Royal at York? How invidious is it to say that anyone acts better? Has not Lord North indulged in one of his honest laughs at her? In fact," the writer continues, "she is a most bewitching creature! She was married to a sea-faring man, who left her the next morning—but it is expected she will improve in a second performance."

The last sentence contains perhaps the first journalistic guess at her past. The papers had not yet begun to trouble themselves seriously about her antecedents.

A few days later Mrs. Jordan was seen on the stage at the same time as Mrs. Siddons, a very rare occurrence during the whole time of their association at Drury Lane. In *The Jubilee*, the pageant which Garrick had written and produced as "a laughable representation of his own Jubilee held at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1769,"* and which Sheridan and King now revived, she was only Rosalind, while Mrs. Siddons rode in a car as the Tragic Muse.

On November 21st Mrs. Jordan essayed another Shakespearean part, Imogen in *Cymbeline*, which she had already played in the York Company, though not to Wilkinson's satisfaction. The provincial manager's opinion was endorsed by the dramatic critics of London, who could not praise her Imogen. According to the *Public Advertiser*, however, she only undertook the rôle on account of another actress's inability to appear. ("The illness of the amiable Miss Farren," we read, "has been generally lamented; but the consternation it has occasioned in 'the Great Green Room' is lamentable indeed. Independent of having given King a fit of the gout, made Smith lose two bets at a cock-fight and Mrs. Jordan act Imogen," it has had other untoward results.) Fortunately for herself she appeared also the same evening in the after-piece; and that was her old Yorkshire success *The Romp*.

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* *Morning Chronicle*, November 19th, 1785. It is described as containing "much whimsical stage bustle, much laughable incident, and much pleasant nonsense mixed up with some pretty airs set to most charming musick." It ran for seventy nights on its first production and largely compensated Garrick for the ruin which Shakespeare all but spelt for him.

"In the farce," says the *Morning Chronicle* the next day, "Mrs. Jordan made ample amends for her deficiency in the play. Her Priscilla Tomboy was as excellent a performance of its kind as we ever remember to have seen, and kept the audience in a continued roar of laughter. . . . The managers of Drury Lane have a most valuable acquisition in this actress. . . . We cannot close this article without observing that Mrs. Jordan's admirable acting, among other good consequences, reconciled the audience to the nonsense and ribaldry that constitutes what is now called *The Romp*, which is the execrable remains of its execrable original, the Opera of *Love in the City*, a production written by the author of *Love in a Village*, and most deservedly damned at Covent Garden Theatre eighteen years ago."

There seems to be a hit at the *Chronicle's* critic in the comment of the *Morning Post* two days later: "The success of the piece [*The Romp*] rests almost exclusively on the spirited performance of Mrs. Jordan, and it must be confessed that there has not been seen a more finished acting of its kind.

It is not to be doubted, therefore, that this ludicrous little after-piece will become a favourite, notwithstanding the fastidious taste of certain critics, who seem ashamed of being so vulgar as to indulge a hearty laugh."

The *Post* was correct in predicting the popularity of *The Romp*, for it was the after-piece on thirty-four occasions before the season came to an end. The Prince of Wales saw it twice in the course of a week.

It would be possible to multiply almost indefinitely quotations from the London Press criticisms of Mrs. Jordan's early appearances at Drury Lane. Amusing as many of them are, however, moderation must be observed, or the story's progress would be unduly delayed. But one most curious example is worth reproducing on account of its sheer extravagance. This runs as follows:

"The *lame*, and the *halt*, and the *leprous* were last Tuesday night invited to bathe in the streams of *Jordan* humour, and to go away happy. What were the salutary effects they best can tell who stood most in need of them; but if we may be allowed to hazard an opinion without detracting from the other properties which the *Jordan* may possess, we conceive its astringent and emulgent properties to have most powerful influence on the *blind*."*

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* Mrs. Jordan's name seems to have had an irresistible attraction for those to whom the pun appeared a high form of wit. The special reference to the *blind* seems to indicate that the writer of the paragraph had a poor opinion of the actress's looks.

Halfway through December, after Cobb's opera *Strangers at Home* had, mainly through her acting and singing combined, become a popular success, King and Sheridan decided that Mrs. Jordan deserved a second increase of salary. "The managers of Drury Lane," says the *Morning Post*, "with a laudable generosity, have resolved to give every encouragement to this favourite of Thalia. Her performance of those characters in which she has appeared has stamped the most indelible impression on the mind of every admirer of the drama. Her peculiar excellence stands in need of no diurnal panegyric; and the versatility and success of her powers must give great pleasure to Mr. Smith, who deserves the thanks of the public for being the happy cause of bringing her forth from obscurity." £12 a week, we learn elsewhere, was the salary now given to her, three times what was stipulated in her original contract; and either now or soon afterwards it was agreed that she should have not one but two benefits in future seasons, a privilege already enjoyed by Mrs. Siddons, but not accorded to anyone else.

A bare two months had indeed wrought a marvellous improvement in Mrs. Jordan's fortunes; and there is no hint that anything but merit contributed to it. Before long there may be reason to suspect that she had a shrewd appreciation of the value of friends on the newspapers and even of a publicity-agent (we read even in those days of "the mercenary of a certain actress"—*Morning Post*, December 14th, 1786); but we can scarcely suppose that in the first two months of her life in London she had been able to purchase for herself a body of partisans. In Gentleman Smith she had a stout supporter, no doubt, but he was neither the Press, the Drury Lane management, nor the playgoing public—all three of whom united to give her praise. If she won a high place quickly, it was because she deserved it by her talents, reinforced by a personal charm which could cross the footlights as well as act directly upon those who met her face to face.

The Christmas season brought with it a rest for Mrs. Jordan, a pantomime taking the place of farces as the regular after-piece; and the rest was prolonged well into the New Year by the managers' discovery of a comedy which was hailed by some as the best since *The School for Scandal.* In *The Heiress*, by General Burgoyne, there was no part for the new actress, the older members of the company claiming all for themselves. The second half of January was entirely devoted to *The Heiress*, and altogether it was played thirty times. With the exception of a couple of appearances in *A Trip to Scarborough* (when one of her critics complained that once or twice she "out-romped the most romping Hoyden"), Mrs. Jordan was not seen again until almost at the end of February, in Colley Cibber's *She Would and She Would Not*. The policy of the management seems curious, after they had raised her salary a second time. But they had a success and could fill the house without her, so reserved her until the public taste should demand a change.

In the interval Mrs. Jordan was not forgotten by the newspapers. In the *Morning Post* of February 16th, we find a paragraph:

"The J—d—n, alias the *Francis*, alias the *Bland*, has not a spark of envy in her composition; the night before she testified considerable marks of approbation at her rival *Miss in her Teens*. Let not then jealousy be set down as any feature in her composition."

On the previous evening Mrs. Brown had played the part of Biddy in *Miss in her Teens* at Covent Garden. The management there, concerned at the wonderful success of Mrs. Jordan at Drury Lane, had looked about for an actress who could play similar parts to hers and had decided that Mrs. Brown was what they wanted. She had left Wilkinson, like her rival, in 1785, but only to join a company at Norwich. In the middle of the winter season there she received an offer from Covent Garden, which she immediately accepted, her husband accompanying her and playing in the Christmas pantomime—whence his name of "Harlequin" Brown. A controversy immediately arose as to the relative merits of Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Jordan, in which their admirers enlisted the aid of the Press. The question of their claims to *The Country Girl* was warmly debated. One of the self-constituted judges, however, settles the matter thus: "It is of very little importance to the world whether Mrs. Jordan is an imitation of Mrs. Brown, or the latter a copy of the former; but, for the satisfaction of the misinformed, Mrs.

Sparkes was the original from whom both the above ladies caught their genuine fire."

The discussion continued beyond this season, and Mrs. Brown always had her followers. But though in some characters she was, on Wilkinson's testimony, superior to anyone, there is no doubt Mrs. Jordan's all-round victory was complete. Mrs. Brown was unwise to challenge the comparison, on another ground than that of acting; she "forgot," says Wilkinson, "what an audience never will, and that was that Mrs. Jordan at that time was *very young*."

There was an appearance of ostentation in Mrs. Jordan's visit to Covent Garden to applaud her rival. But her usual generosity is perhaps well enough established to redeem her from the accusation of mere theatricality on this occasion.

On returning to activity, Mrs. Jordan found in the Hypolita of *She Would and She Would Not* another opportunity for a triumph, of which she availed herself fully. Genest records that, when he was introduced to her in 1814 and mentioned the great pleasure which he used to have in seeing her as Hypolita, she answered, "Aye, that was one of the parts on which I used to pique myself." When the time for her benefit arrived on April 28th she chose this play and *The Irish Widow*, making in the latter her first appearance as Mrs. Brady.

At the benefit a striking testimony to the favour in which she stood was the presentation of a purse of £300 from Brooks's Club. "The Whigs of that day," writes Boaden, "had a very strong personal attachment in their principles: they loved the principles sometimes for the men, and the men frequently for the principles. Burgoyne being attached to the Earl of Derby, they supported ardently *The Heiress* and Miss Farren [one day to be Countess of Derby]; but they were not insensible to the claims of Mrs. Jordan, and on the night of her benefit . . . such an audience was collected as had been very seldom seen, and the Whig club made her a very handsome present as a tribute to her merit."

In the *Morning Post* of May 1st is published the actress's appreciation of the way in which she had been treated:

"Mrs. Jordan returns her grateful thanks to the very splendid assembly that honoured her benefit on Friday evening last; and assures them that her utmost endeavours will be exerted to preserve their countenance and protection."

In reply someone inserted the next day a poem of which the merits scarcely equalled the writer's enthusiasm for his subject:

Long have my fretted organs rung
With Jordan's praise from every tongue.

* * *

But I, unable to endure
Applause so rash and premature,
Resolved, a rigourist profest,
To stand aloof from all the rest.
When studious this effect to shew,
Anon I found my courage go,
And yielding to the tiresome elf
Became the flattering fool myself, etc.

The memorable winter season of 1785-6 was now drawing to its end. Except for further appearances in *The Romp*, in which she played for the thirty-fourth time at the Theatrical Fund performance, Mrs. Jordan had little more to do. But she had in eight months accomplished a great work. She had overthrown, in London at least, the supremacy of tragedy, which Mrs. Siddons had established on apparently so firm a base. It was no longer necessary for Society to feel shame at "being so vulgar as to indulge a hearty laugh," to borrow the phrase of one of the writers quoted above. The comic genius commanded now "such a train of fashionables on her nights as had never been known to assemble except on nights when Mrs. Siddons trod the boards"*

She had not, of course, entirely escaped that penalty of success, the carping critic. There were those who adhered to the old-fashioned view as to the vulgarity of comedy and turned up their noses at her art. Others objected to her occasional incursions into tragedy. "Certain theatrical paragraph-mongers seem to be not a little hurt at the success of Mrs. Jordan," writes a supporter. "They wish, in their friendship, to dissuade her from all attempts at Tragedy, and to deny her that display of her powers which Mrs. Abington and Miss

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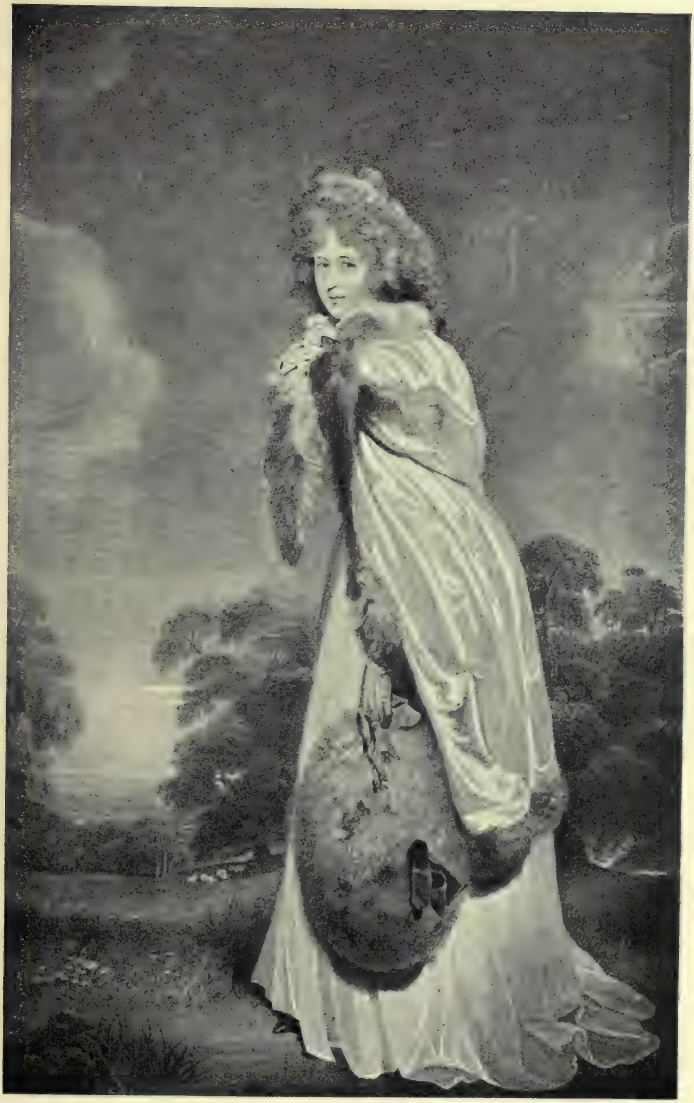
* *Public and Private Life*, 14. A few pages later, and possibly referring to the following year, the same writer says that "so eager was the public desire to catch a glance of our Syren of the boards that we have actually known persons take their stations near the stage-door to witness her stepping from the carriage, or entering the same, on proceeding to or returning from rehearsals."



From an engraving by F. Bartolozzi after a painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

ELIZABETH FARREN, COUNTESS OF DERBY.

[*Facing p.* 88.

Farren have repeatedly made, by performing in both play and farce on the same evening. The best answer, however, to their good-natured labour is the receipts of Old Drury treasury."

But the volume of praise almost drowned the few discordant notes. Moreover, she was well able to defend herself. We must now begin to believe that she had learnt the uses of advertisement. Whatever we may think concerning the spontaneity of various paragraphs already quoted, we can hardly resist the suspicion of inspiration in an open "Letter to Mrs. Jordan" which was published on March 1st, 1786, in the columns of the *Morning Herald*. It is signed "One of your greatest Admirers," and professes to "reduce into this epistolatory form the general sentiments of this city with regard to you, and thus to convey to you the very flattering testimony which every private circle and every public assembly bears to your dramatic excellence." "I have a pleasure," says the writer, "in thinking that this letter may possibly procure you in the reading a momentary flash of that satisfaction and honest pride, which I presume you are susceptible of, in common with sensible and ingenuous hearts. You perceive that you are a great favourite amongst us. There is no company where Mrs. Jordan is not named with uncommon applause. But that you may the better know what particular qualities you possess to charm so extensive an audience, give me leave to inform you that they are principally your remarkable skill in apprehending nature and your extreme good humour. . . . We conceive you without those airs and that caprice which, in almost every instance, produce in the end a lasting rupture between the performer and his audience. . . . Let me entreat you, from the most unselfish motives, to persevere and cultivate these admirable qualities; and that you and the public may remain ever on the most cordial terms is the earnest wish of," etc.

Much later in life Mrs. Jordan expressed a poor opinion of the public's discrimination. In his *Records of My Life*, John Taylor, author of *Monsieur Tonson*, says: "Mrs. Jordan, though so full of spirit, and apparently of self-confidence, was by no means vain of her acting. I remember sitting with her one night in the green-room at Covent Garden Theatre, when she was about to perform the part of Rosalind in *As You Like It.* I happened to mention an actor who had recently appeared with wonderful success, and expressed my surprise at the public taste in this instance. 'Oh! Mr. Taylor, don't mention public taste,' said she, 'for if the public had any taste, how could they bear me in the part which I play to-night, and which is far above my habits and pretensions?'"

Mrs. Jordan was about fifty at the time of which Taylor is writing. It is not likely that the same words would have come from her mouth at twenty-three.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND SEASON

IN the brilliant light of her London triumph the domestic existence of Mrs. Jordan fades into obscurity, or rather vanishes completely as far as our knowledge of it is concerned. But when Drury Lane's doors had shut for the summer of 1786, Mrs. Bland and her younger daughter emerge for a moment to show that they had continued to live with—and on—the genius of the family. Of the little Frances we hear nothing; it is to be hoped that the pensioners paid for their maintenance by tending her.

On June 16th, Mrs. Jordan, with Mrs. and Miss Bland, arrived in Leeds on their way to Edinburgh and Glasgow, where engagements awaited the actress. The York Company was playing at the theatre; and now occurred the only example which has been recorded of vengefulness on the part of Mrs. Jordan against a fellow-actress. We have heard of Mrs. Robinson—not "Perdita," but "the Siddons of Manchester"—and her jealous depreciation of Wilkinson's Great Treasure. This night, it happened, was her benefit, and the farce she had chosen was *The Irish Widow.* Mrs. Jordan and her party came to the play. Wilkinson tells the story at considerable length, how the London star displayed herself first in the upper-box for the edification of the audience; how she came down after the first piece and renewed her acquaintance with her old friends behind the scenes; how she posted herself at the wing, resting on her sister's arm, to watch *The Irish Widow;* and how, by slow degrees, she advanced so far upon the stage that in the last scene, where the Widow Brady appears in small-clothes, she was well in view of the house. Mrs. Robinson, already annoyed at the poorness of her benefit, was enraged to a degree. But, nevertheless, "she kept up her spirits, to let the Jordan see how well she could act, and with a sneer, not the gentlest, darted a glance at the Jordan, insinuating, 'Can you act like this?' The other, with all the nonchalance of fashion, said a great deal without ever speaking a word, for her gestures and pantomime action were inimitable; and as she leaned on her sister she pointed at Widow Brady's buckles, then at her figure, next with a significant shrug that the whole was intolerable, and at last, after giving the torture in an elegant and truly significant fashion, she gave her a last look and turned away with the grandest contempt and hauteur."

Mrs. Jordan was, of course, merely "getting her own back," and her verdict on her rival was no juster than had been her rival's on her. In little over a year Mrs. Robinson, now become by a second marriage Mrs. Taylor, was actually playing the Widow Brady at Drury Lane—for all we know, before Mrs. Jordan's eyes.

Before she left Leeds Mrs. Jordan was asked by Wilkinson to play one night for him, and to his disgust she insisted on half the receipts after the first £15. As, however, she filled the house to overflowing before the play began, it is clear that she did not overestimate the magnetic power of her London fame; nor can we look upon her demand as a proof of a grasping disposition.

The visit to Scotland was a triumphant success for Mrs. Jordan. On the occasion of her benefit at Edinburgh she was moved to treat the audience, after the play, to an address in verse of her own composition. As a rather favourable example of her style this epilogue may be quoted in full:

Presumption 'tis, in learning's seat,
For me the Muses to entreat;
Yet, bold as the attempt may be,
I'll mount the steed of poesy;
And as my *Pegasus* is small,
If stumbling, I've not *far* to fall.

Hear then, ye Nine! the boon I ask,
While (throwing off the comic mask)
With gratitude I here confess
How much you've heightened my success.

By sealing thus my sentence now
You've heaped new laurels on my brow;
Nor is the Northern sprig less green
Than that which in the South was seen;
For though your *sun* may colder be,
Your *hearts* I've found as warm for me.

One wreath I only gained before,
But your kind candour gives me more;
And, like your *union*, both combine
To make the garland brighter shine.

'Tis true such *planets* sparkled here
As made ME tremble to appear—
A *twinkling star*, just come in sight,
Which, tow'rds the *Pole*, might give no light!

Melpomene has made such work,
Reigning despotic like the Turk,
I feared Thalia had no chance
Her laughing standard to advance:
But yet, her youngest ensign, I
Took courage, was resolved to try
And stand the hazard of the *die*.

Since then the vent'rous I've tried,
With Nature only for my guide.
The *bets*, if fairly won, I'll take,
Nor *wish* to make it my *last stake*.

Edinburgh responded to Mrs. Jordan's address with a presentation, before she left for Glasgow, of a gold medal on which was inscribed: "A small Tribute from the Admirers of Genius to the Child of Nature." After this it is not surprising to learn that the rival city, when she came to it, presented her with another gold medal, accompanied by a letter, in which she was begged to "accept this trifle from the Glasgow audience, who are as great admirers of genius as the critics of Edinburgh."

On her way back to London in September, Mrs. Jordan stopped again at Leeds, and again was asked and consented to play for Wilkinson—who evidently, therefore, was not dissatisfied with his profit on her single appearance three months earlier. But now, unfortunately, the atmosphere of Leeds was changed. Mrs. Siddons had visited Yorkshire in the interval and made a complete conquest on behalf of Tragedy. It was a "Siddonian year," says Wilkinson. Mrs. Jordan gave Leeds *A Trip to Scarborough*, *The Poor Soldier*, *The Country Girl* and *The Romp*. "But all would not do, Melpomene's bowl and dagger having left such an awful gloom that even Thalia could not laugh; or, if she did, it was very mortifying, as it was to herself almost without company or any throng of visitors."

Drury Lane reopened on September 16th, but it was five days before Mrs. Jordan was seen. The *Morning Post's* criticism on the occasion is interesting. The writer is in a didactic mood, but what he says makes us feel that he had his eye on a real flaw in the actress's manner, at that period at least.

"Mrs. Jordan," he says, "who captivated the town last year with her excellent comic abilities, appeared last night, for the first time this season, in *The Country Girl*. She again displayed those extraordinary talents with which nature has endowed her, and was in consequence received with the warmest tokens of approbation. We acknowledge ourselves to have been highly pleased with Mrs. Jordan's performance; and as we are great admirers of her still, particularly in representing characters of youthful innocence and archness, we would wish her to avoid encouraging the idea of being what is termed *in possession of the town*, which is apt to occasion an indulgence of improper and *outré* action; we perceived somewhat of this last night, which, if not checked in due time, may be the means of impeding her progress to the summit of excellence, at which no performer can ever attain without a strict attention to *chaste acting*. This hint is not unworthy of Mrs. Jordan's attention in every comic character she performs; and as we mean it in the most friendly manner, we have our hopes that it will be so understood—for as we truly and sincerely subscribe to her merit, we think it but justice freely to point out her blemishes."

Even at this opening stage of the theatrical winter season we find the Jordan-Brown controversy flourishing. On September 20th Mrs. Brown had played *The Romp* at Covent Garden, with fair success, but apparently without the naturalness of her rival. A paragraph in the *Post* on the 26th very pointedly remarks: "The little Jordan is now confessedly allowed to be the first *tear-cap* on the stage—all further competition is vain. They may prate of copyism and what they will—her only lesson and study is from plain and simple nature." Yet, strange to say, when next *The Romp* was seen at Drury Lane, on the 28th, Mrs. Jordan was "much below herself," according to the *Post*.*

The two ladies were soon afforded an opportunity of displaying their respective merits in another line than that of "tear-caps." Both Drury Lane and Covent Garden put on versions of Sedaine's opera *Richard Cœur de Lion.* Covent Garden had the initial advantage in bringing the piece out first; but Drury Lane's adapter, Burgoyne, had done his work better, and though eight days later in starting this version ran about three times as long. At Covent Garden Mrs. Brown played a boy, Antonio; at Drury Lane Mrs. Jordan was Matilda, disguised as a boy, the Antonio being Miss Romanzini, a newcomer. As Matilda Mrs. Jordan, we read, "displayed a softness peculiarly affecting, and in her execution of the air manifested great musical taste."

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* Another critic remarks that "the trash of *The Romp* begins to lose its influence, the tricks of the actresses who gave it celebrity have been repeated so often that they are now tedious and unpleasant." Against this, on our heroine's behalf, we may set the verdict of *The Wandering Patentee*: "Surely it must have been Mrs. Jordan alone who could have made so execrable a piece as the cut farce of *The Romp* draw audiences for not only a number of nights, but, what is more extraordinary, a number of seasons."

Yet the very same paper, in which this remark appeared, only seven weeks later thought it necessary to rate the actress with considerable severity on the subject of her singing. At her request one night Kemble, before the play began, asked the audience to be indulgent to Mrs. Jordan, as she was rather hoarse. This irritated the *Morning Post* critic, who read her a short lecture upon affectation. The sequel appears in the following statement, which was published in the *Post* of December 8th:

"It was the most injudicious method that Mrs. Jordan, or her friend, could pursue, to force us by an ill-advised reply, to investigate further the subject of the apology for her real or pretended hoarseness a few nights ago. Mrs. Jordan, in a certain cast of characters, and that a confined one, we have considered far from contemptible. But as a singer we never could have conjectured that it was even the Lady's own ambition to be thought one. Let us examine, in a cursory manner, her claims as a vocal performer. Has she voice? Has she taste? Has she any knowledge of music? Her every attempt has fully convinced us, and must every impartial person, that she is not possessed of one or other of these indispensable requisites. Her singing has always been on sufferance; and if an apology ought at any time to have been made, it should have been then, when she was allowed to sing at all. Since Mrs. Jordan, therefore, has so little pretensions to the title of singer, all apology was unnecessary, and assuming rather than humble; as it conveyed an idea that she once had musical abilities, which is evidently contradictory.*

"Mrs. Jordan is altogether so unqualified as a singer that we hold all her *airs* to be *unnecessary*."

Mrs. Jordan was wise enough not to carry any further the always one-sided contest with a newspaper, and made her peace with her censor, as is apparent from the *Post's* statement on the 12th that "We are exceedingly rejoiced to find that the hints given to Mrs. Jordan in this and other prints have had their desired effect; the numerous apologies in the different papers of yesterday convince us that she sensibly feels the propriety of our observations."

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* It is bare justice to Mrs. Jordan to quote Oxberry's criticism of her singing: "With but very little voice she contrived to sing all sorts of songs well and has executed a great deal of difficult music; she possessed a remarkably fine ear."

The reference above to "Mrs. Jordan, or her friend," brings us to an episode in her history which drew down upon her, both during her lifetime and afterwards, a great deal more blame than seems legitimate, while the man who was a partner in it escapes comparatively free; the fact of the connection not being mentioned against him, for instance, in the article upon him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

It is not certain that by "her friend" the *Morning Post* refers to Richard Ford. Possibly no more is intended than some acquaintance of Mrs. Jordan, commissioned by her to remonstrate with the writer of the criticism upon her singing. On the other hand, though the beginning of her association with Ford has never been precisely dated, the loose statements to be found in various quarters seem to point to a period comparatively soon after she had established herself at Drury Lane. An unnecessary amount of confusion has been introduced into the story through the acceptance by many later writers of a statement made in Oxberry's *Dramatic Biography*, that after her arrival in London, Mrs. Jordan "formed a connection of a tender nature with *Mr. Ford, son of Richard Ford, then Chief Magistrate at Bow Street*."* As Sir Richard Ford is known to have died in 1806, at

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*** Doubtless the mistake was due to Mrs. Oxberry editing her husband's literary remains after his death. *The Secret History of the Green Rooms* gives correctly the parentage of "Mr. F—d." It is curious that the *Public and Private Life* should follow the Oxberry version, seeing that the author appears really to have been acquainted with Mrs. Jordan when she passed as Mrs. Ford.**

the age of forty-seven, it is clear that no son of his could have been associated with Mrs. Jordan in the manner suggested during the period 1785-90. As a matter of fact the son Richard Ford, author and critic, was not born until 1796, his mother having been a Miss Booth. Mrs. Jordan's friend was the future police court magistrate himself. He was the son of a well-known physician, Dr. Ford, who combined his professional practice with an interest in Drury Lane Theatre, of which he was part-proprietor until he sold his share to Sheridan in 1788.

Through his father, no doubt, Richard Ford had a large theatrical acquaintance and could have no difficulty in obtaining an introduction to Mrs. Jordan when he saw and admired her at Drury Lane. This may have taken place at the beginning of her London career. Ford is said to have made an early declaration of his passion, accompanied by a solemn promise of marriage, which, however, must be deferred, as he was afraid of his father's anger and the consequent loss of the allowance which he made him. Believing in his honour, Mrs. Jordan consented to an irregular union, though "it was given out by both parties, and universally believed, that, if they were not actually married, yet they were bound together equally strong."*

There is no hint that since her betrayal by Daly Mrs. Jordan had ever strayed from the path of correct morality. Her acquaintances with the Duke of Norfolk and Cornelius Swan were quite innocent. She was supposed to have "discovered some partiality," as Boaden expresses it, for one of the actors in the York Company, George Inchbald, stepson of the celebrated Elizabeth; but he, apparently, did not return the sentiment until after Mrs. Jordan had established her reputation at Drury Lane, when "he brought himself to make proposals, which were seriously declined." It is clear that Mrs. Jordan's heart was not deeply touched by this tardy suitor. With what feelings she regarded the impetuous Ford, on the other hand, can only be gathered from the fact that she made him a faithful wife (in all but name) until the arrival upon the scene of the Duke of Clarence, when Ford revealed his true nature unmistakably.

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* *Secret History of the Green Rooms*, article on Mrs. Jordan.

"Of all the men whom it has been my chance to know," says Boaden, "I never knew a man of whom there is so little to tell as Sir Richard Ford. I asked men of his own standing at the bar, and on the bench, their recollections of Ford. They knew him as I did, personally, but he had impressed their minds as a fly would their hands—they had just shaken it, and it was gone." This is a curious verdict upon one who succeeded before his death in becoming a member of Parliament, an under-secretary of State, and the head police magistrate in London; but we have no evidence to set against Boaden's. Only Mrs. Jordan's regard for him, which we must presume, invests Ford with any real interest.

Mr. and Mrs. Ford—for on entering into her contract with him she took his name off the stage—would appear to have set up housekeeping in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, if we read aright *The Public and Private Life of Mrs. Jordan.* It was here that the author of that work, "a mere stripling" at the time, first met the subject of his biography.

He has some details about this phase of her existence which are to be found nowhere else and are therefore worth reproduction. Some of them belong to the later years of the Ford *ménage*, but for the sake of convenience we may give them all together:

"So invariably correct was the conduct of the lady whose annals we record that no suspicion was ever entertained respecting her not being legally the wife of Mr. Ford. Many instances illustrative of this fact might be adduced, but as one will speak for the rest, we beg to instance the names of Sir Francis Lumm, Bart., and his Lady, who resided in Argyle Street. They were in the habit of giving splendid routs, at which Mrs. Ford was constantly received as the wife of that gentleman, who uniformly attended such parties with his *protégée;* being by him introduced in the character of a married woman."

This writer says nothing of the relationship between Lumm and the Blands, which serves to explain Mrs. Jordan's acquaintance with Sir Francis. The latter's mother was sister to Doctor Bland's second wife, Lucy Heaton—Mrs. Jordan's grandmother.* We have seen that he was not only a kinsman but a close friend of Francis Bland, to whose memory he erected a tablet in Killarney church. It is significant that more than eight years after Francis Bland's death Lumm was acting as patron to his daughter. The statements which we find in various writers of a recognition by some of Bland's relatives of the claims of his first family certainly receive confirmation from this fact, though it does not assist us to discover what was the precise nature of the connection between Mrs. Jordan's mother and father, nor how it terminated.

"The Baronet and his lady," continues the *Public and Private Life*, "kept a great deal of evening company, but their dinner-parties proved extremely select, there being never more than four persons, independent of themselves, who sat down to table. Of the latter, as constant attendants, were the late Captain B—yly, nearly allied to the present Ma—s of Ang—a, and his lady, with Captain Hill and his wife, a daughter of Lord Molesworth. The cloth being withdrawn on those occasions when Mrs. Ford was expected to join the evening party, the conversation generally turned to the subject of the advances made by her illustrious suitor, when Lady Lumm's uniform observation was: 'I shall again this evening instil into her mind the absolute necessity of *sticking* to Mr. Ford, for I am well convinced no good will accrue from the princely association.' This advice her ladyship never failed to inculcate—making our actress take her seat beside her at the card-table, when she would at intervals, in a half-whisper, repeat the counsel alluded to. . . . On more occasions than one the writer was present at the parties, when our heroine's affability of manners and sweetness of deportment were the general themes of admiration, a sentiment still more enhanced when she electrified the audience by warbling out one of her ballads wild

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* G.E.C., *Complete Baronetage*, gives the following details about the Lumms: Francis Lumm Esq., of Lummville, King's County, eldest son of Thomas Lumm (who was a son of Elnathan Lumm the banker and Dorothea, daughter of Colonel William Purefoy) and Sarah, daughter of Francis Heaton. Born about 1732; Governor of Ross Castle 1762; created baronet (Ireland) 1775; died and was buried at St. James's, Westminster, 1797. He married in 1757, Rebecca Amelia, third daughter of Richard Forster, but had no issue.

—That flowed like softest music
O'er the placid surface of the deep."

Mrs. Jordan, we are told, never touched a card; and as the company sometimes included "Lady C—ll—r, famed for pilfering card-money," this was as well.

We must now return to the Drury Lane season of 1786-7. Largely, no doubt, owing to the success of *Richard Cœur de Lion*, the managers did not appear to think it necessary to exhibit their little comedian in new parts—with the exception of Miss Prue in Congreve's *Love for Love*, the character in which Mrs. Brown had come out at Covent Garden the previous season. The public grew at last restive at the policy of the management. A paragraph in the *Morning Herald* at the beginning of 1787 remarked: "That jewels ever retain their intrinsic value we know, but they certainly also obtain an additional lustre by new setting." And some weeks earlier, in the *Morning Post*, "an admirer of Mrs. Jordan, who has frequently observed, in a less exalted station, the versatility of her genius, and who rejoices at her being transplanted to a soil whose warmth must mature her to perfection, recommends to the managers of Drury Lane the novelty of her Mackheath, a treat which, in common with thousands, the writer of this has been feasted with."*

Still Mrs. Jordan continued to appear in a restricted number of parts. On April 13th, however, she had a benefit, at which the selected plays were *As You Like It* and *The Sultan: or A Peep into the Seraglio.* This was her first essay as Rosalind and a very successful one. Genest, when criticizing Mrs. Siddons's performance in the part says that when Mrs. Jordan had played it, few persons wished to see Mrs. Siddons in it. As we have already heard, Mrs. Siddons was prudish about Rosalind's male costume, apart from her lack of the comedy required for the impersonation of the character. But Mrs. Jordan's reading was hailed enthusiastically, in verse and prose. One of the poetasters declared a little later in the day:

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* *The Beggar's Opera* was soon afterwards put on at Drury Lane, but Mrs. Jordan was not in the cast. Harris, the manager at Covent Garden, had scornfully said of the new artist at the rival house the previous year that she was suited for the part of Filch in this opera. "Here he prophesied," Boaden remarks, "for she stole away the hearts of the town."

Mrs. Jordan must have played Macheath in the provinces, but we do not hear about it from Wilkinson.

> Till Viola beautified the scene
> And Rosalind the bower,
> Thy blossoms, Jordan, had we seen,
> But not thy fairest flower.

As Roxalana, in the farce on her benefit night, she had appeared previously during the season. One of the newspaper critics remarks that "Mrs. Jordan's property can never cease when she can prosper on such sorry stuff as *The Sultan*." But, however poor the play, the actress's success in it was due to more than her mere popularity. "Never," says one who witnessed her performance, the author of *The Public and Private Life*, "never shall we forget the fascinations of her manner while sustaining the part; which were of such a winning nature that we have seen Barrymore, who personated the Grand Turk, unable to keep his countenance when it was requisite for him to have looked the stern Bashaw. In one instance, on quitting the boards, he ran into the green-room, threw himself on a sofa, and after indulging in a laugh that was nearly suffocating, turned to our heroine, exclaiming: 'By the Holy Prophet, madam, if you continue to play after this fashion, you will despatch me in an agony of laughter to the seventh heaven, there to enjoy my houris everlastingly.'"

After her benefit little more was seen of Mrs. Jordan. On April 16th she was indisposed—as also, unfortunately for the theatre, was Kemble—and a withdrawal of *Richard Cœur de Lion* was necessitated.

She was soon back at work, but after May 4th her name figures no more in the bills this season. There is no explanation forthcoming as to the reason for this. *The Country Girl*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Irish Widow*, *A Trip to Scarborough*, and *She Would and She Would Not* were all staged, but with other actresses in the parts previously taken by her. To make the puzzle still greater, before May ended she was playing in the provinces. One thing is certain, and that is that it was not on account of a decline in the popular favour that she dropped out of the Drury Lane bills temporarily. Possibly the following paragraph may be considered too obviously inspired to be good evidence; but it is interesting through its defence of her private character at the period, against which it is possible that stage-rivals had ventured to make suggestions, though they do not reach our ears.

"Mrs. Jordan's merit has been to the managers of Drury Lane a perfect magnet of attraction, and like a magnet has suffered no sensible diminution in its attracting powers. We have heard much, at times, of the various private virtues of different performers. Let it be remembered, therefore, that this lady likewise does not rest all her pretentions to public favour on her abilities as an actress, but on those to which as a woman and as a member of society she is so highly entitled. A person who has known her for some years delineates her character as possessed of the greatest sincerity, humanity, and good nature; and, as he early saw, so he early foretold that her merit would one day raise her to the situation which she now fills so much to the public satisfaction, as well as to her own advantage."*

The writer might have added "and to the advantage of the Drury Lane management," since it was calculated in 1786 that since her engagement Mrs. Jordan had brought in £5,000 to the coffers of the theatre. This, at least, is solid evidence of her popularity. So too is an advertisement which came out in one of the papers in April:

"This day is published, price 1s., lines addressed to Mrs. Jordan. Printed by T. Beckett in Pall Mall, of whom may be had, price 1s., An Essay on the pre-eminence of Comic Genius; with Observations on the several Characters Mrs. Jordan has appeared in."

When she had reached the stage at which two shilling books could be compiled about her and offered for sale, it is clear that she might well lay claim to be a public idol; and it was at this time, too, that Romney painted his portrait of her.

As has been said, Mrs. Jordan did not await the end of the Drury Lane season. That closed on June 9th, but on May 27th we find her playing the first of three nights for Wilkinson at Leeds. She was on her way north to Scotland again, and broke the journey as in the preceding year. She appeared twice on each night, giving *As You Like It* and *The Sultan*, *She Would and She Would Not* and *The Virgin Unmasked*, *Twelfth Night* and *A Trip to Scarborough.* "The receipts were very good," says Wilkinson. "His Grace the Duke of Norfolk was there, which did not make her profits less at her benefit."

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* *Public and Private Life*, p. 44, where this "just tribute of praise to Mrs. Jordan's private character" is assigned to a daily paper in the month of October (1 86).

It was while she was at Edinburgh this summer that Mrs. Jordan bore her first daughter to Richard Ford, to whom was given the name of Dora. The London newspapers did not miss the opportunity of displaying their humour over the event, according to the taste of the period. Thus the *Public Advertiser*, for instance, makes comment on September 6th, a fortnight before the re-opening of Drury Lane:

"Mrs. Jordan's knocker is completely *muffled*, the lady of the mansion being at this time completely in the *straw*, but has so perfectly timed this her second offering at the shrine of Lucina that she will be enabled to take her part again in the ranks of Thalia on the Boards of Old Drury."

A mock advertisement in the same paper a few days later announces, under the heading of Homeward Bound: "The JORDAN from Edinburgh—a small sprightly vessel—went out of the London harbour *laden*—dropped her cargo in Edinburgh," etc.

Truly, it was even more embarrassing to be a popular actress in those days than it is now!

CHAPTER VIII

A SET-BACK AND A RECOVERY

IT was to a troubled state of affairs at Drury Lane Theatre that Mrs. Jordan returned in the winter season of 1787-8. The managers were at variance with one another and with the performers, and the policy of the house suffered in consequence. Mrs. Jordan does not seem to have been involved in the disputes at the start, appearing not only in some of her old parts, but also as Juletta in a revival of Fletcher's *The Pilgrim*—a character which Boaden finds admirably contrived to show her infinite humour. After the ordinary break, however, which the Christmas pantomime made in the performance of farces, there is a total absence of Mrs. Jordan's name from the play-bills until April. Her existence was certainly not forgotten entirely by the public, for we find imitations of her, among other leading ladies, being given with applause by Miss Bannister at the Royalty Theatre. But the real Mrs. Jordan was not on view. A number of curious paragraphs were published in the daily

Press with reference to her disappearance. Here are two from the *Morning Post:*

"Mrs. Jordan has been indisposed for some time, and is determined not to recover until the manager will suffer her to appear in her favourite character—that of Mrs. Ford. If Mrs. Jordan should appear in this character, there is not a doubt but she will perform the *Merry Wife* in a most capital style." (January 28th, 1788.)

"The *Jordan* and her lover are said to have ceased performing the Constant Couple; the *gentleman*, it seems, becomes cool and careless, the *lady* of course jealous and enraged; so the *river* in its present state of storm and agitation, is no longer *Ford*-able." (February 1st.)

The inference which readers are apparently intended to draw is that Mrs. Jordan had refused to act unless she were announced on the bills as Mrs. Ford, and that, Ford objecting, she had quarrelled with both him and the managers. But she hastened to contradict this report, in a letter which appears in various papers, including the *Post* and *Herald:*

"SIR," she wrote,

"A variety of paragraphs having lately appeared in the newspapers, tending to convey an insinuation that I have declined performing again at Drury Lane Theatre until I am announced in a manner different from what I have been, I beg the favour of you to insert this Letter, as a positive denial of such charge and of the supposed circumstances on which it is grounded. A long continuance of severe illness has alone been the cause of my absenting myself from my duty to the proprietors and the public.

"I am, Sir, &c., &c.,
"Dora Jordan.

"Gower Street,
"Feb. 4th."

Even this denial, however, did not silence the gossips. Paragraphs continued to appear, and on February 19th, the *Post* informed the public that "from Mrs. Jordan a second epistle is expected, but not in a style so laconic as the first: it will be in the manner of an appeal, and in the style of the *revelations*."

Perhaps it is not necessary to state that no second epistle was received, "in the style of the *revelations*." But it is probable that there was something behind Mrs. Jordan's long-continued absence besides mere indisposition. She had been living with Ford as his wife for about two years now, and his promise to her was no nearer fulfilment, although she had borne him a child. He could plead that his father was still a big shareholder at Drury Lane and that he was still dependent on him; but this was a poor plea to set against the annoyance caused by journalistic allusions to the irregularity of her connection.

At last the indisposition came to an end—or the actress decided to return to work. On February 29th, the *Morning Post* wrote:

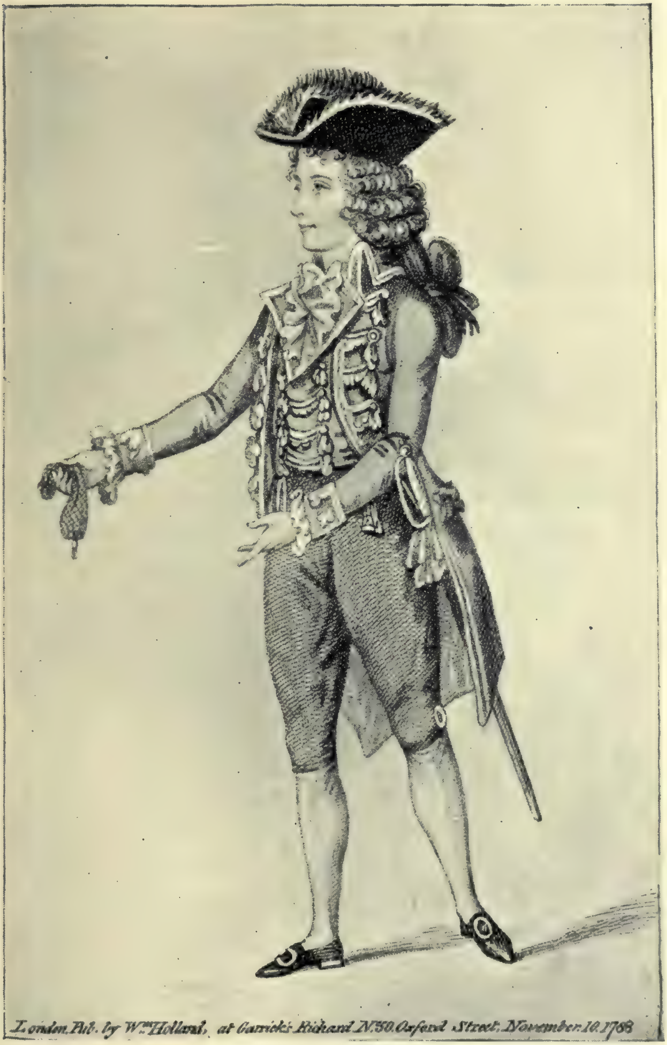
"It is an inexpressible satisfaction to have it in our power to say that Mrs. Jordan's illness now wears a more favourable aspect, and that a short time may restore that favourite actress to the Public." A couple of days later a theatrical advertisement announced that Mrs. Jordan, being very nearly recovered from her late indisposition, would shortly appear in the character of the Country Girl. And on April 5th, she was once more seen at the theatre in her old part of Peggy. The *Post* notes that the audience was not so large as the return of so great a favourite might have been expected to attract. It can hardly be doubted that she had jeopardised her popularity, for a time at least, and incurred the suspicion of caprice. The management, too, would appear to have been offended with her. At any rate they did not advertise her much for the remainder of the season. But she was given the opportunity of displaying herself, at her benefit on May 2nd, in a part new to her but soon made very much her own—Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's *Constant Couple*. Peg Woffington had played this to great applause nearly half a century earlier, and many actors and actresses had essayed it both before and after, with varying success. Among the failures had been Thomas Sheridan at Dublin, of whom it was said that he would hardly have played Wildair had he not been manager at the time. Mrs. Jordan, on the other hand, caused the part always to be remembered afterwards for her assumption of it. Yet the ever-discriminating critic of the *Morning*

Post was not altogether satisfied. On the second night of *The Constant Couple* he wrote:

"Though her performance of the character was by no means critically just, it was certainly very pleasant. This actress assumes the virile character with much ease, but in all parts not absolutely of the *boyden* cast there is a graceful freedom of deportment necessary which she has not yet attained."

A less friendly judge wrote in the *European Magazine* for May: "Mrs. Jordan performed the part of Sir Harry Wildair for her own benefit; and had she confined her performance to the one evening it would have been without our disapprobation. Since the time of Mrs. Woffington several females have been eager to expose themselves in male characters. . . . On such deviations from propriety we think it sufficient to observe that they are offensive and disgusting; and, where talents, as in the present case, are united deserve every censure that can be bestowed upon them."

We shall see that there were others, outside London, to whom Mrs. Jordan's Wildair did not appeal. It is only fair, however, to say that a very strong chorus of praise greeted her in London. No critic is more enthusiastic than Boaden. "I remember her well on this night of laughter," he says, referring to her benefit-night, "charmingly dressed and provokingly at ease, in situations which, unaided by wine, few men view without embarrassment. No doubt either Wilkes or Lewis was the more perfect representative of Wildair; but neither of



London Pub. by Wm. Holland, at Garrick's Richard No. 50 Oxford Street, November 10 1788

From an old print.

MRS. JORDAN
as *Sir Harry Wildair.*

[*Facing p.* 114.

them afforded such delight as the two female rakes [Mrs. Woffington and Mrs. Jordan], who were loved for their own sakes, while laughed at for ours. . . . There was something in Mrs. Jordan," he continues, "which was fairly unaccountable. She was nervous in the theatre, and even at the wing before she came on; once before the audience she could do anything. As the leading *male* of the comedy, at its close she resolved to do all the honours. She stepped before the curtain to the lamps, and gave out the play for the next night; she then announced with great impression, the play of *All For Love* for the Monday, and with deliberate respect pronounced the words 'being for the benefit of Mistress Siddons.' It took the audience by surprise; but they felt the kindness soon and applauded it, when . . . she bowed profoundly and hurried up to her dressing-room to prepare for Matilda in *Richard Cœur de Lion*."

The season, after having added less to our actress's reputation than could have been expected, came to an end in June. And now a fortunate accident prevented her from repeating this year the northern trip which she had made in 1786 and 1787. Mrs. Siddons had been engaged by the Edinburgh management, and there was—to use the language of the day—no place for Thalia beside Melpomene. The good fortune of this lay in the fact that Mrs. Jordan was driven to seek for a new field; and a most promising one lay open to her. The health of George III. having recently been bad, one of his doctors prescribed a course of

Cheltenham waters, and at the beginning of July his impending departure, with the Queen and three eldest Princesses, was announced. The visit was a great event for the then remote and insignificant Gloucestershire spa.* "Cheltenham," says the *Morning Post*, "will obtain a fashion that from its situation it otherwise never could have acquired—being a small and indifferent town and until within a few years very little known. The new buildings, however, lately erected by Mr. Millar, have considerably improved the place and rendered it somewhat comfortable for visitors. At this place, some few years ago, Mrs. Siddons was accustomed to exhibit her great tragic power in a theatre, we believe, made out of a barn."

On July 12th, the day of the royal journey, we are assured, as "an absolute fact," that no less than sixty-seven hairdressers set off for Cheltenham in one drove; and hairdressers, in those times, were the unfailing escort of the *ton.* (Lord Halifax's definition of Superfine Gentlemen still held good—"Men whose heads may be said to be only appurtenance to their perukes.") No wonder, then, that the successor of the barn blossomed out under the name of the Theatre Royal, and that disengaged actors and actresses were eager to show themselves on its boards. Mrs. Jordan secured an engagement and posted for Cheltenham on the morning of the 20th. "Their Majesties," stated a friendly paragraph,

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* It was so little known that one London journalist, writing on the building of a new street in the town, announced that it led down to the sea!

"do not honour the playhouse till Mrs. Jordan makes her appearance." She seems to have at once enlisted the Cheltenham correspondent of the *Morning Post* on her side. "Mrs. Jordan's popularity," we read in that paper, "has been so great at Cheltenham that next to the eagerness of the people to see the Royal Family has been their expectation of this comic heroine. Her success has not fallen in consequence of this highly raised desire, for she has performed to crowded houses, and her fame has even increased since her theatrical appearance. . . . It is said that the Royal Family have signified an intention to honour the theatre before their departure, on one of the nights when that favourite actress exhibits her sprightly powers."

She played at the Theatre Royal from July 23rd to some time in the second week of August, her recorded appearances being in *The Virgin Unmasked*, *The Sultan*, *The Country Girl*, *The Maid of the Oaks*, and *The Poor Soldier*. Perhaps it was in deference to the notoriously proper taste of George and his consort—whatever may be said of those of the three Princesses—that, as far as we know, she gave no male impersonation.* The Royal Family came to see her play twice, and both then and throughout her season she had "very polite and crowded audiences." There was no doubt about the wisdom of her trip to Cheltenham, where she was alike "honoured and profited."

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* In *The Poor Soldier*, on the second appearance before Their Majesties, she took the part of Kathlane, not her old character of Patrick. (*Morning Post*, August 8th.)

The residents in the neighbourhood took an early opportunity of showing their appreciation of her visit. Soon after her return to town the following announcement was published:

"It is not at the shrine of the tragic muse alone that the theatrical amateurs have sacrificed this summer. Thalia, in the person of Mrs. Jordan, has just received an offering equally creditable to all parties. The Noblemen and Gentlemen now resident at Cheltenham held a meeting on Friday last when it was resolved, 'That, in consequence of the delight experienced this summer by inimitable acting, an elegant medal be presented to Mrs. Jordan, as a small tribute of approbation for the pleasure derived by the Noblemen and Gentlemen at Cheltenham in the year 1788.' The medal is to be executed by one of the first artists in London, and when finished to be presented to Mrs. Jordan at her house in Gower Street." (*Morning Post*, September 16th, 1788.)

The *Public and Private Life* informs us that Mrs. Jordan was subsequently "waited upon by Boles Watson Esquire, who presented her with an elegant medallion locket, richly set on one side with fine pearls, in the centre of which was a beautiful painting of the comic muse, from the original picture executed by Sir Joshua Reynolds. On the reverse was placed, in blue enamel, an oval of fine brilliants, and in the centre the following inscription in gold letters on white enamel: *Presented to Mrs. Jordan, Thalia's Sweetest Child.*"

We cannot suppose that the effect of this summer engagement was other than excellent for the actress's reputation. Humble Cheltenham in itself might not, indeed, count for much; but Cheltenham reinforced by the King, the Queen, the three elder Princesses, all the *ton*, and sixty-seven hairdressers, was a very different matter. After the slight set-back which she experienced in the preceding winter this Cheltenham triumph must have been a most welcome restorative. John Edwin, of Covent Garden, opening the Richmond Theatre for a short season during the summer, made much of the fact that he was able to secure the star actress for an occasional prologue. Boaden preserves two lines of this prologue, which as he says "describe plainly enough the popularity of the charmer:"

My next vast merit I must have a word on.
Ecod! d'ye know—I've got your Mistress Jordan.

During Mrs. Jordan's absence from London, the politics of Drury Lane had undergone a revolution. Her original discoverer, "Gentleman" Smith, had retired into private life at the end of the previous season. This made little difference, for Smith, if an influential member of the company, was not of the management. A serious defection, however, was that of King, the manager with or under Sheridan. King, the creator on the stage of Sir Peter Teazle and of Puff, found the father of those immortal characters as uncomfortable to work with as did everyone else; and his official position made the discomfort unbearable. In an appeal to the public afterwards he declared that he had never had sufficient authority to command the cleaning of a coat or adding a yard of copper lace, much less the power of approving plays or engaging performers. His limit of endurance was reached when Dr. Ford announced his intention of selling his shares in Drury Lane and retiring for the remainder of his life to what the newspapers described as "an elegant, compact seat in Glamorganshire." King wished to buy part of these shares, and having gambled away his cash offered security. The Doctor refused this and agreed to sell all to Sheridan, thus making him and his father-in-law absolute proprietors of the theatre. Nor was King even able to get a definite treaty from Sheridan defining his rights as a manager. He therefore threw up his post and declared war on Drury Lane, while temporarily retreating to Dublin. The breach was not final, for two years later the aggrieved actor returned. At the moment, however, his feelings were very bitter.

The mere departure of King did not affect Mrs. Jordan much personally, since he was not in any sense her partisan. Indeed, from the fact that her friend the Duke of Norfolk was credited with advancing Sheridan £18,000 to purchase Dr. Ford's rights in Drury Lane, we may imagine that she sympathized with Sheridan rather than with King in the quarrel. But what did affect her seriously was that in King's place Sheridan appointed John Kemble to be manager. Kemble was both a precisian and a devoted adherent of his sister. His early association with Mrs. Jordan at Smock Alley does not seem to have induced him to treat her with special kindness. At the very beginning of his management at Drury Lane, on the other hand, we find Mrs. Siddons placed on so favourable a footing that, while she drew no regular salary, she was to receive thirty pounds a performance, appearing as her health permitted or her inclination suggested.

As for Mrs. Jordan, it was but a very short time before there was a sharp passage of arms between her and the new manager, to be followed by a still graver disagreement, which nearly ended in her departure from Drury Lane.

CHAPTER IX

QUARRELS, TRIUMPHS, AND SOME FAMILY AFFAIRS

THE season of 1788-9 was some six weeks old when Mrs. Jordan, having been announced to play Miss Prue in *Love for Love*, was suddenly "prevented by illness" from appearing.* A statement in the *Morning Post* of November 1st, however, suggests a different reason for her withdrawal. "The man," we read, "who permitted Mrs. Jordan's brother to pass behind the scenes of Drury Lane Theatre was fined five shillings for that enormous breach of decorum, which Mrs. Jordan discharged for him." The affair was not allowed to rest at this. Kemble was being attacked by paragraphs and letters in the Press on various grounds—King's friends, it may be suspected, being responsible—and the trouble over Mrs. Jordan's brother was made another stick to beat him with. However, he did not want for supporters, among whom "Veritas" wrote to the *Post* on November 8th, declaring that Kemble's refusal of admission and fine did him much honour. "Intruders behind the scenes may ruin every performance," says the writer. "Mrs. J., not contented with bringing her mother with her, introduced her brother, sister, and a train of followers."

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* At the end of September one of the papers remarked that "Miss Farren and Mrs. Jordan appear to work willingly for Drury Lane house, which, in such degenerate theatrical times as the present, is a virtue." In a very short time the same paper complained of "the greater luminaries unaccountably withholding their radiating powers from the regions of Old Drury"—mentioning Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Jordan, and Miss Farren as all absent at the same time.

While Mrs. Jordan's devotion to her family was admirable, it is easy to see that from Kemble's point of view it was attended by great inconvenience. Of this brother—whom we know by no other name than that of "Mr. Bland," which appears on the playbills and elsewhere—there is not very much to be told. His early life, and indeed the greater part of it, is obscure. As a boy in Dublin he was for a time in St. Patrick's choir. After accompanying his sister Dorothy in her flight to Liverpool and Leeds, in the summer of 1782, he disappears from view. It is true that a paragraph in the *Morning Post* of October 16th, 1786, says that "a brother of Mrs. Jordan, who has for a great while given a fair promise of abilities in the musical line, will, it is supposed, be taken notice of by the managers and be produced to the public eye." This supposition was not justified for more than two years, though in the autumn of 1787 the rumour was revived, followed by a statement that Mr. Bland's appearance was postponed until the next season at Drury Lane. Where he was in the meantime we cannot say. According to one account,* his father's relatives stepped in to give him an education and sent him to Oxford. This may possibly have been an invention of Mrs. Jordan, though we hear of no contradiction. The tale goes on that he felt the attraction of the stage, doubtless encouraged by his sister's triumphs to hope for success himself. He is said to have deserted the University, therefore, in 1788 and to have joined Boles Watson's Cheltenham Company at a salary of a guinea a week. As Mrs. Jordan was on her visit to Cheltenham in the summer of 1788, when an undergraduate would have been in enjoyment of his long vacation, there is at least a semblance of probability about this part of the story.

Mrs. Jordan, it is quite likely, used her influence to secure a trial for her brother; and as he made a creditable start at Hereford, playing Young Norval in *Douglas*, she promised him to get him into the Drury Lane Company after he had gained some experience on tour. But if, when she brought him behind the scenes at Drury Lane, she was attempting to force from Kemble the concession which she had failed to obtain from King she was for the time unsuccessful, and young Bland had still to wait for an engagement.

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* *The Secret History of the Green Rooms* (1793 edition), article on Mr. Bland. *The Thespian Dictionary* (1802) merely says that, after leaving Ireland, Bland became an actor in England and made his first appearance at Drury Lane as Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* on February 10th, 1790.

Mrs. Jordan's indisposition soon passed, however, and she reappeared, greeted by a friendly puff, which remarked that "the recovery of Mrs. Jordan will be of advantage to Drury Lane, as hers are the only bills from that quarter that are duly honoured." Not only was she seen in her old parts, but two revivals were made with her as the leading lady. In Vanbrugh's *Confederacy* she played Corinna—"a Corinna fully equal to any representative of the character since the year 1705," says Boaden—and in *The Pannel* Beatrice. *The Pannel* was the name given by Kemble to the farce which he himself cut down from the old comedy *'Tis Well it's no Worse*, and his labour on it shows that he at least recognised Mrs. Jordan's commercial value. It was in this play that she had to recite some lines which are still famous:

Ah why, when I try your affection to move,
Are you deaf to my sighs and my tears?
Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But why did you kick me downstairs?

On the same night, November 28th, that Drury Lane produced *The Pannel*, Covent Garden brought out a new comedy by Mrs. Inchbald entitled *The Child of Nature*, which proved so great a success as to run for nearly forty nights. Mrs. Jordan's admirers did not fail to seize upon the title as an excuse for praises of their favourite, and in one of the papers there appeared some verses by George Saville Carey, a man who failed as an actor, to turn author, dramatist, and poet—of sorts:

Thy play, fair Inchbald, surely is miscalled,
I fain would have you name that brat again;
That name was surely long ago forestalled,
The Child of Nature is at Drury Lane.

Yet I am pleased with thy prolific muse,
Nor would I wish to check thy rising fame.
Nature thought fit a favourite to chuse.
The world approved, and Jordan was her name.

Verse tributes to Mrs. Jordan are very frequent at this period and few fail to allude to her natural gifts.* Here is one rather superior to the average (which indeed was of low quality), styled "Impromptu on seeing Mrs. Jordan as Matilda in *Richard Cœur de Lion:*"

See Jordan! Thalia's darling child
In soft Matilda's part,
She warbles sweet her tuneful note
And captivates the heart.

Her pretty smiles and easy air
True comic humour show,
And Nature is the only source
From whom these beauties flow.

The tide of her popularity was at the full again, and when her first benefit of the season took place, she was most successful with Rosalind

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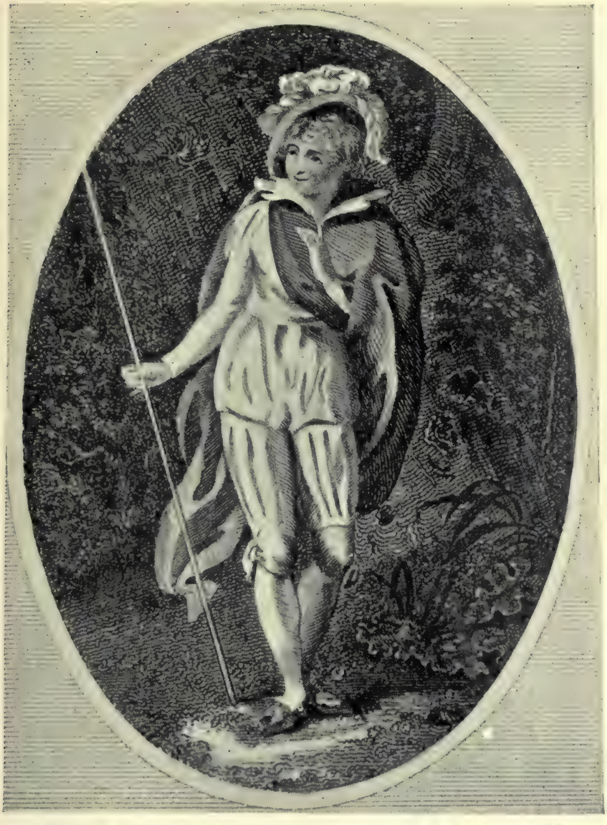
* Boaden records a remark by Mrs. Jordan herself on the subject of her naturalness. "The secret of her charm, as she told a friend, was that, 'when she had mastered the language of a part, she said to Dame Nature, my head, hands, feet, and every member about me, are at your commandment.'"



From an engraving by J. Alais after a painting by R. Satchwell, 1800.

MRS. JORDAN

as *Rosalind* in "As You Like It."

"Break an hour's promise in love!"

[*Facing p.* **126.**

in *As You Like It* and Nell in *The Devil to Pay*. Her Rosalind, indeed, somewhat divided the town, according to Boaden, the sentimental school upholding Mrs. Siddons's interpretation. But in *The Devil to Pay*, revived after ten years' oblivion by London, she carried all before her. "To speak of her Nell is unnecessary. Those who have seen it will laugh at the very word; those who have not may rest satisfied that every succeeding performer of the part will preserve something of her *naïveté*, with such powers as they can bring to the competition." Yet another admirer of the actress can only describe the part of Nell as "vulgar nonsense."

Popular idols can seldom refrain from believing strongly in their own merits; and it cannot be said that Mrs. Jordan was unjustified in thinking that now she was worth more than she was getting at Drury Lane. She was undoubtedly a greater attraction than Mrs. Siddons. Yet Mrs. Siddons was drawing thirty pounds for a performance, whereas she only received still the twelve pounds a week which was her salary at the end of her first London season. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear at the beginning of 1789 that a sudden indisposition had overtaken Mrs. Jordan, necessitating the withdrawal of *The Pannel.* On January 11th the *Morning Post* throws some light upon the nature of the indisposition:

"There is at present a difference between the Managers of Drury Lane and Mrs. Jordan, and the subject, we understand, is a demand of an increase of salary. As the managers have always conducted themselves liberally in regard to pecuniary matters, it is to be hoped that no essential dispute will prevail between them and this favourite performer. It is supposed that the coals of *contention* have been *stirred* up by a certain meddling *go-between.* The actress has, however, too much sense to throw herself out of a good situation, and the managers certainly know her value too well to part with her upon a slight cause, particularly as she most probably does not act from her own opinions."

It is easy to guess by which side this statement was inspired, though not so easy to judge who is the meddling *go-between.* Possibly the reference is to Richard Ford, who, since his father's retirement to the "elegant, compact seat in Glamorganshire," was no longer bound to the interests of the Drury Lane management, and who, we may imagine, would rejoice to see his mistress in receipt of a larger salary.

The dispute was not destined to be settled so easily as the *Morning Post* hoped, and a rumour was spread that Mrs. Jordan was about to transfer her services to Covent Garden—whereon the *Post* came out with the two following paragraphs close together in one of its columns:

"What's the reason the Public never hears of the sicknesses of actresses at Covent Garden?—Because there the Proprietor pays none that won't work. *Discite justitiam monitæ.*"

"Too much of Mrs. Jordan and her engagements.

What use of her at Covent Garden while Miss Fontenelle is there?"

Miss Fontenelle was a young actress who had made her first appearance at Covent Garden that season, so that there was a decided spice of malice in the comparison of her with Mrs. Jordan. But there is little wonder that the Press, or those who used it for airing their opinions, grew restive at the continual upsetting of the Drury Lane programme through the alleged indisposition of the rebellious actress. After two more sudden alterations of arrangements we read a statement which obviously was sent in by a friend of the manager:

"Mrs. Jordan and Kemble, according to Green-room report, are not upon the most amicable footing. It is supposed that the lady takes advantage of her popularity *to be ill when she pleases*, and has refused to perform in a farce when Mrs. Siddons performs in a play, and for this modest reason, 'that *she* will not fill the house and let Mrs. Siddons run away with the reputation of it.' If this be true, it is proper to tell this lady that this higher province of the drama will prevail when *dowdies* and *hoydens* are forgotten or despised." (*Morning Post*, March 10th, 1789.)

This was followed up by a letter signed "Stage-Trap," in which Mrs. Jordan was decried and Kemble upheld. "Take her out of *hoyden rusticity*, and what is she?" asks the writer. ". . . Will the Public then sanction her in opposing the manager, or demanding an increase of salary because she can at present excite curiosity, when perhaps in a little time her attraction may be wholly exhausted?" Another correspondent, signing himself "Crito," took up the actress's defence, claiming that, "when the salary of performers is far below the rank of their talents and the advantages arising from their labours, the Public should interfere." "Crito" believed, or affected to believe, that Mrs. Jordan only had six pounds a week. "Impartialis"—as far as writers who adopt such a signature usually are from impartiality—entered the fray on the other side, chiefly to exalt Mrs. Siddons at the expense of her comic rival.

Other journals devoted space to the quarrel, the *World* being particularly bitter against the comedian. A contemporary* inserts the following, in which the writer has the satisfaction at the same time of rebuking the *World* and of announcing Mrs. Jordan's victory:

"We can by no means approve of the detraction from Mrs. Jordan's merits which is daily attempted in a certain paper—where it is perpetually asserted

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* Probably the *Public Advertiser.* The extract, which is dated March 18th, is from a book of press-cuttings, etc., relating to Drury Lane, in the British Museum.

With regard to the attitude of the *World* the *Morning Post* also thought a rebuke necessary: "Mrs. Jordan is an actress of undoubted merit, she never acts but the house overflows, her gaiety is so natural and her manner so engaging. What can be the reason that the booby *World*"—the *Post's* regular name for its fellow-journal at this period— "never allows her any praise? Perhaps *low envy* counteracts justice in a certain quarter, and demands the sole appropriation of puffs."

The *World*, however, was incorrigible. On May 15th, it remarked, under the heading of "The Jordan": "Drury Lane, like Virgil's Fields, if not the Elysian, may be 'too much i' th' sun'! *Solstitias Humidas*—Or who must see the Benches?"

From an engraving by Armytage after a painting by T. Gainsborough.

MRS. SIDDONS.

[*Facing p.* 130.

that the house was very indifferent, the benches empty, when the direct reverse was the fact. That excellent favourite of the publick never appeared to a greater advantage, or drew a more brilliant audience than on Monday last—a stronger evidence of her great value cannot exist than the compliance of the Managers to her encrease of salary from twelve to thirty pounds during the term of an article for the former sum in full force and existence."

Mrs. Jordan's triumph was sensational. She was obliged, it is true, to engage herself to act in future three times a week, twice in both play and farce, once in farce only; but a regular weekly salary of thirty pounds was then considered enormous. According to the author of the *Public and Private Life*, it was only extorted after a genuine offer had come to Mrs. Jordan from Covent Garden. *Carte blanche* was tendered, he says, in order that she might name her own terms. "Alarmed at the idea of losing one of the main props of his house, Mr. Sheridan had an interview with Mrs. Jordan, who having stated her grievances respecting the Kemble coterie, he at once closed with our heroine. . . . In reference to the dissatisfaction of Mrs. Siddons, a caricature was issued, we believe from a design of Bunbury, representing the tragic queen with pockets overgorged with gold and bank-paper; while hanging to the prong of a pitchfork thrust up from the infernal regions was a bag of gold, to obtain which the hungry Melpomene was stretching forth her hand in a fine tragedy attitude, accompanied by a look of greedy supplication."

When she had obtained her great rise, Mrs. Jordan was no more troubled by indisposition, but attended assiduously to her duty for the remainder of the season. Her popularity had been in no way lessened by her past absences, and the fashionable world smiled upon her. One night, we read, the Duke of Cumberland was seen "in close *confab*" with her. "Such an union of wisdom and elegance has seldom been observed," remarks a journalist, with his tongue in his cheek. But the actress no doubt appreciated the patronage without caring whether the Duke was wise or foolish. She had now met two members of the royal family, the Prince of Wales and his uncle. A third arrived in London this spring, whose meeting with her was to be a far more serious matter; but though we hear of Prince William Henry, as he was then called, at Covent Garden Theatre in early May, he does not appear to have visited Drury Lane. In fact, more than two years had still to pass before we can say for certain that he set eyes on his charmer—and his ultimate victim.

This summer Mrs. Jordan went north to play a third time for Jackson at Edinburgh and Glasgow. On her way she stopped at Leeds as before, and gave Wilkinson the advantage of her assistance. Her old manager had, not long before, broken his leg, and she wrote to him making the offer of a gratis performance. This was generous; but unfortunately a misunderstanding arose which decidedly marred the harmony of affairs. We have only Wilkinson's account, so that it would be unfair to blame the actress too severely for the conduct imputed to her. Moreover, Wilkinson undoubtedly was responsible for the beginning of the trouble. He first appointed July 6th for his benefit night and then altered the date to the 8th. Mrs. Jordan reached Leeds on the afternoon of the 6th, prepared to play that night, and found not her selection, *The Constant Couple* and *The Devil to Pay*, but two other pieces advertised. It was but natural that she should be surprised and annoyed.

Wilkinson makes the most of the disagreeable undertaking which it would have been for Mrs. Jordan, after a post-journey all the way from London, to act two long parts like Sir Harry Wildair and Nell—"particularly in her situation at that time," he adds. This is, of course, beside the point, as she announced herself ready to keep her engagement. He was much aggrieved when she told him that, since there was a five hundred pound penalty if she should fail to reach Edinburgh in time, she would not stay two days longer at Leeds unless he paid her thirty pounds for her services. This was very different from the gratis appearance first offered, and he remonstrated; whereon she came down to twenty pounds. This he paid, but without enthusiasm.

To make matters worse, when the 8th arrived, *The Constant Couple* failed to please Leeds. "In the country," Wilkinson remarks, "all sorts of ladies judge Sir Harry at best a loose companion, and his chastity not strengthened, but much to the contrary, when represented by a female." The benefit was not a great success and left a feeling of soreness in all parties concerned. Mrs. Jordan showed her chagrin by some capricious behaviour, which might have cost her dear. "She was in a violent stickle to be at Edinburgh, but had only proceeded the first stage . . . when she halted at Harrogate and engaged to play three or four nights for a certain sum, which the company at the different hotels were to make up in a subscription-purse."

From Thomas Dibdin's *Reminiscences* we learn that a touring party under a manager called Butler was at Harrogate at the time, Dibdin himself being one of the actors. Butler engaged Mrs. Jordan, and also Miss Wallis from Covent Garden, to strengthen his company for a few nights. Mrs. Jordan made a little money at Harrogate, but when she reached Edinburgh found Jackson angry with her for her late arrival. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the illness of her mother influenced Mrs. Jordan rather than a mere desire for a few more pounds in her purse. And it was certainly through her mother that her engagement at Edinburgh came to an unfortunate end. The season was proceeding well when Mrs. Bland died. The daughter insisted on a temporary retirement, and this led to an open rupture with Jackson. According to *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, the manager "attempted to raise an odium on her" for not performing on certain nights which she had promised gratis. Apparently he wished to cancel the contract. "His design, however, was obvious; and the Edinburgh audience testified their determination not to be deprived of their favourite by the parsimony or caprice of an unpopular manager." They parted finally at Glasgow, Jackson giving a bill for £100, which was protested in London. Threats of litigation followed on both sides, but came to nothing.*

The *Secret History* states that Mrs. Jordan sat up six nights with her dying mother, who expired in her arms. There can be no doubt that she was an extremely affectionate and devoted daughter; far beyond the merits of Mrs. Bland, one might be inclined to say, if one had the right to judge that lady without knowing her full story. We have not the full story, and against the fact that we see her unable to prevent first the seduction by Daly, and then the compact with Ford, we must set Mrs. Jordan's unwavering attachment to her.

On Mrs. Bland's death some verses "to the memory of a revered mother" appeared in the *Edinburgh Herald*, over the signature D. J. No praise can be claimed for them as poetry, but they are an excellent illustration of the attitude of the younger toward the elder woman:

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* Mrs. Jordan wrote a letter from Chester, while on a short North of England tour before returning to London, in which she repudiated Jackson's published version of their quarrel, complaining that she had been compelled to borrow money at Edinburgh to meet her obligations, and referring to the protestation of the bill. "I have now entirely done with this subject," she concludes "and, thank God, with Mr. Jackson, who, I hope, by his punctuality to pay his *at present protested note*, will not compel me to resume any acquaintance with him by the methods the law points out." (*Public and Private Life*, pp. 46-7.)

> Be ready, Reader, if thou hast a tear,
> Nor blush if sympathy bestows it here;
> For a lost Mother hear a Daughter's moan,
> Catch the sad sounds, and learn like her to groan!
> Yet e'en these groans, sad echoes all to mine,
> Must prove faint offerings at so dear a shrine.
> If feeble these, how feebler far must be
> The tribute to be paid by poesy!
> The bleeding heart that's whelmed with real woe
> Affects no flowers near Helicon that grow;
> Sobs and swoln sighs ill suit smooth numbered lays,
> The tear that waters cypress drowns the bays.
> Hard then must be the task in mournful verse
> The praise of a lost parent to rehearse.
> Mild suffering saint, exemplary through life,
> A tender Mother and a patient Wife;
> Whose firm fidelity no wrongs could shake,
> While curbed resentment was forbid to speak.
> Thus silent anguish marked her for her own,
> And comfort, coming late, was barely known;
> It, like a shadow, smiled and slipped away—
> For churlish Death refused to let it stay;
> A two-fold dart he levelled to destroy
> At once a Mother's life and Daughter's joy.
> Better a double summons had been given,
> To wipe out sorrow's score and make all even
> By kindly calling both at once to Heaven.

It is an interesting fact which is mentioned in the *Public and Private Life*, that at the time of this Edinburgh visit the treasurer of the theatre was an elder half-brother of Mrs. Jordan's father. This was John, the disinherited son of Dr. Nathaniel Bland by his first wife. Entering the army in his youth, he had served as a cornet in the dragoon regiment of his probable relative Colonel, afterwards General, Humphry Bland, and, after fighting at

Dettingen, had been taken prisoner at Fontenoy.* Subsequently, through his acquaintance with Digges, he was attracted to the stage, with the result that his father cut him off. In 1772 he and Digges jointly took the Edinburgh Theatre. Neither as an actor nor as a manager would he seem to have achieved much success, since for a long time previous to his death in 1808 he was supported by contributions from his family. He once wrote a novel, *Frederick the Forsaken*, which is unknown to fame, and was a versatile, eccentric character. It is unfortunate that we do not hear anything concerning his acquaintance with his niece. She does not mention his name in her complaints about her treatment at Edinburgh.

Owing to her condition, which Wilkinson noticed as early as her arrival in Leeds in July, Mrs. Jordan took no part in the opening of the 1789-90 season at Drury Lane. During the winter she bore a daughter to Richard Ford—Lucy, the third in her long list of children—and it was not until February 8th that she was seen again on the stage. The *Public Advertiser* notices her return in the following delicate fashion:

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* See the result of Mr. J. F. Fuller's investigations into John Bland's history, *Notes and Queries*, 10th series, VII., 131 and 191. Previously some had supposed that his alleged presence at Dettingen and Fontenoy was an error due to his confusion with Humphry Bland. The latter's regiment was the 3rd King's Own (Bland's) Dragoons. He was Major-General under the "Butcher" Cumberland in the Culloden campaign, and from 1752 to 1763 was Governor of Edinburgh Castle. The probability of the relationship of the two families of Bland is increased by the fact of John's service in the General's regiment, if not by that of both being connected with Edinburgh at some time in their lives.

"Mrs. Jordan was extremely well received on her appearance in *The Country Girl.* She is somewhat *increased* in Bulk; though from late accounts we should rather incline to read *diminished.*"

In the same paper we find a decidedly curious story of Drury Lane, the essential part of which we reproduce as it was originally printed:

"KEMBLE *versus* THE JORDAN.

"'It is not in the bond,' said Kemble, producing Mrs. Jordan's articles. 'I cannot see it in the bond.'

"'Bond me no bonds,' answered little Jordan. 'No bond could ever bond me. Mrs. Siddons has been indulged with it. Miss Farren has been indulged with it. Mrs. Crouch has been indulged with it, and I'll be indulged with it.'

"Now these words were about the most simple *thing* in *nature.*

"They were about a *conjunction copulative.*

* * * * * *

"*And* is the *conjunction copulative*, about which Kemble *and* Mrs. Jordan quarrelled; Mrs. Jordan insisting that whenever her *parts* were published her name should be preceded by an *and*—thus:

"*And*
"*The Romp* by Mrs. Jordan."

A few days later a Drury Lane advertisement announces *The Sultan,* concluding with the words "and Roxalana, Mrs. Jordan." She was not invariably billed thus henceforward, but where she plays one of her favourite characters the "and" usually appears.

It is plain that she felt her position at Drury Lane very secure now—especially in the total absence of Mrs. Siddons this season—and that she was not afraid of presenting fresh demands to Kemble. She gained one long-cherished wish only two days after her return. The manager at last agreed to take on her brother at a salary of five pounds a week, and on February 10th he played Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* to his sister's Viola. Boaden says concerning young Bland's appearance on this occasion: "Perhaps he was personally more like her than a stranger to her blood; and as in his figure he did not tower above the disguised sister, the mistake of one for the other less offended the spectator's eye. But it was not in this family that the males shared the genius of the females—that proud distinction the 'bountiful blind woman' reserved for the Kembles."

From this it may be gathered that Boaden thought little of Bland as an actor. Some newspaper critics later on complained of his effeminacy. However, the friendly author of *The Secret History of the Green Rooms** says of him in 1793 that he is making a very flattering progress in his profession. "In what are called the *walking Gentlemen* he is more than useful—his person and deportment being very genteel: he begins to acquire confidence, and if he studies hard and is brought forward as he deserves, he will soon be of considerable importance to the Theatre."

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* Friendly, that is to say, to Mrs. Jordan, to Bland, and to some others. He is, however, anything but friendly to a number of those whose biographies he writes.

This hope Bland was not destined to fulfil. In interesting herself on his behalf Mrs. Jordan unconsciously had an evil influence on her brother's destiny. At Drury Lane when Bland joined the company was a young actress named Romanzini, daughter of an Italian Jewess, who in childhood had appeared as a reciter at the Royal Circus. It was said that the Circus engaged her on the recommendation of the hairdresser to the troupe—she was not the first actress to owe her start to a Puff, remarks a contemporary wit—though we know from other sources that she, like Rosoman Wilkinson and another popular favourite, Miss De Camp, afterwards Mrs. Charles Kemble, was a pupil of Charles Dibdin, the father of Thomas. Having a voice, the girl made a hit; and, being ambitious, she determined to qualify herself for the legitimate stage. Her first engagement was under Richard Daly in Dublin. Here she did well. Daly, as usual, made love to her. But she had a watchful mother, who, according to the story, told him: "You have one very fine vomans of your own, so I beg you will let my little black ting alone!" Anyhow, Miss Romanzini escaped the fate of Mrs. Jordan and came back to London the gainer by her Dublin experiences, with the reputation of a sprightly actress and an agreeable singer, if not a beauty. She came out at Drury Lane in the season after her future sister-in-law; appearing, as has already been mentioned, in *Richard Cœur de Lion* on October 24th, 1786, when she was Antonio to Mrs. Jordan's Matilda. She soon established herself as a favourite with Drury Lane audiences in light opera and comedy, and often played the "breeches-parts" so popular with her sex in the profession then.

Miss Romanzini had therefore been at the theatre more than four years when Bland arrived, and had already made a name for herself. They quickly fell in love with one another and in the first month of their second season together—on October 21st, 1790, they were married.* About August, 1792, Mrs. Bland gave birth to twins; in connection with which event a story was related. The Haymarket Theatre used then to have a summer season, fitting in between the regular winter seasons at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. In 1792 both Bland and his wife were at the Haymarket, the latter playing as late as the July 25th before the birth of her children. After the twins' arrival *The-Son-in-Law* was put on, Bland taking the part of Arionelli—in which his sister had preceded him. One of his lines was: "Marriage! Oh dat is quite out of my way." The actor Wilson, who was playing Cranky, promptly replied: "Indeed! Then how came you to have twins t' other day?" On which the author of *The Secret History of the Green*

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* *Gentleman's Magazine*, November, 1790. On December 14th, Genest gives in the cast of *The Deaf Lover* at Drury Lane, "Betsey Blossom = Mrs. Bland, late Miss Romanzini."

Rooms gravely remarks: "This liberty of losing sight of the Drama for the sake of a joke is not to be defended, but in the present instance it had the desired effect of producing an universal burst of laughter and approbation."

So far Bland's stage life had apparently been a happy one. We may carry the story to its conclusion here. He and his wife continued to act together at Drury Lane and the Haymarket until about the end of the season 1794-5. Then the husband's name drops out of the bills. *The Thespian Dictionary* in 1802 informs us simply that, "in consequence of a separation from his wife, he retired from the London boards, and occasionally performs in the provincial theatres." Oxberry's *Dramatic Biography* supplies the missing details of the separation. At the Haymarket the Blands played with an actor named Caulfield, who soon began to pay marked attentions to the wife. Rumours got about, but Bland believed Caulfield a friend of his and took no notice of them at first. Nothing came out publicly, but the company believed that Mrs. Bland not only betrayed her husband but also ill-used him. At last, feeling poignantly his wife's bad conduct and finding nothing but misery in his home, Bland left her, to die in America of a broken heart. The last statement can be confirmed to a certain extent. *The Gentleman's Magazine* for November, 1807, has the following paragraph among its obituary notices:

"At Boston, in America, about four months since, in the utmost poverty and indigence, poor

Bland, brother of Mrs. Jordan, and husband of Mrs. B. of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane."

The unfortunate man apparently went to what *The Wandering Patentee* calls "that fashionable resort for country actors, America," to earn a living on the stage there, and failed completely. His wife continued in active service at Drury Lane at least until the spring of 1822, when her name is found in the cast for the adaptation of Scott's *Pirate* on January 15th. On July 5th, 1824, she received a last benefit, the performance being under the patronage of the Duke of York, but by this time she was inflicted by melancholy madness, and the money raised was devoted to putting her under trained care.*

In her theatrical life of over forty years Mrs. Bland formed a connecting link between the days of Mrs. Abington, Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Crouch, Mrs. Siddons, and those of Madame Vestris and Clara Fisher—to name only two of the celebrities early in the third decade of the nineteenth century. Her private history shows her in a detestable light. On the stage Genest pronounces her to have been chiefly a singer, but also of considerable merit as an actress, while the author of *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, writing of her in her youth, says that, though she could not boast of beauty or elegance, yet she was "one of the most favourite and justly admired actresses in the metropolis." Oxberry thus describes her personal appearance: "Considerably below the common size; corpulent and thick-set; with very dark hair, large and unprepossessing features, but extremely fine eyes; her complexion excessively dark, and her whole appearance truly Mosaic." He is very complimentary, however, about her singing—"she had all the requisites of a first-class vocalist . . . we never heard her equal"—and calls her "a better actress than the public imagined."

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* *The Thespian Dictionary* says concerning Mrs. Bland, that "an unfortunate malady, occasioned by the accidental loss of a child, has lately deprived the public of her performances." The explanation of this is to be found in Oxberry. Mrs. Bland came into a room and found one of her children cutting up some lace upon a dress of hers. She gave it a violent shaking and put it outside the door. When she went out again she found it dead. She developed temporary insanity in consequence.

Of Mrs. Jordan's relations with her sister-in-law we know nothing. She continued to act with her in spite of the cruel way in which Bland was treated by her. But here she could scarcely help herself. If never an idol like Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. Bland was at least highly appreciated by the London public for her talent in comic opera, and the Drury Lane management could not be expected to dismiss her for being a bad wife to an indifferent actor, even though he might be brother to a star. Nor could Mrs. Jordan, with her crowd of dependents, afford to throw up a splendid position in order to avoid contact with her brother's wife. That she still played in the same pieces with Mrs. Bland does not argue a lack of sensibility on her part. To sentiment she was prevented from sacrificing by circumstances; and of these the chief was her young family, who had no legal protector but herself.

It is rather curious to find that the father of the eldest of these children, the little Frances, was moved by a desire to set eyes upon her. This at least is the story in the *Public and Private Life.* We are told here that Daly more than once on visits to London—he made one such visit in the autumn of 1788, on recruiting work for his Dublin theatre—used every endeavour to procure an interview with Mrs. Jordan and to obtain a sight of the offspring which she had borne him. "But in vain, her stern resolve proved inexorable, for as she had sworn so she acted, neither suffering her sight to be blasted by the betrayer of her honour or yielding the fruit of her disgrace to the arms of an inhuman and profligate parent." *

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* It is true that a newspaper in January, 1791, states that "very liberal proposals have been made to Mrs. Jordan from the Irish Manager, which are said to be acceded to by the favourite daughter of Thalia"; but the report had no foundation.

CHAPTER X

MRS. JORDAN MEETS THE DUKE OF CLARENCE

THE spring of 1790 brought little in the life of Mrs. Jordan which need detain us. On March 22nd she took her benefit, her only one this season owing to her late return to Drury Lane. The play was *The Belle's Stratagem*, wherein she was Letitia Hardy for the first time, and the farce *The Spoil'd Child.* It was never revealed who was the author of the latter, which was variously ascribed to Isaac Bickerstaff, to Mrs. Jordan herself, and to Richard Ford. The credit, whosever it was, is not very great, for *The Spoil'd Child* does not contain much beyond a series of practical jokes played by the hero—such as substituting his aunt's favourite parrot for the pheasant on the spit, sewing together with needle and thread a courting couple, removing a chair suddenly from behind an old gentleman, and so on. It served, however, to furnish the actress with an extremely popular part, that of Little Pickle the

From an engraving by J. Heath after a drawing by Thomas Stothard.

MRS. JORDAN

as *Hypolita* in "She Would and She Would Not."

"A villain!"

[*Facing p.* 146.

schoolboy, and some songs which pleased the town.* One night in May, when *The Spoil'd Child* was to have been played as the after-piece, at the last moment the programme had to be changed (perhaps owing to the real indisposition of Mrs. Jordan this time), whereon the audience broke into riot, and shouting, "No play, no play, return the money!" forced the management to pay them back their entrance-fees.

The tradition is that it was Little Pickle that conquered the heart of the Duke of Clarence, though we cannot say whether he saw the play in its first season. He had at least the opportunity of doing so before he left London for Plymouth on May 12th, to take up the command of the *Valiant;* but if so we should have expected to find the fact noticed, as the young sailor was much in the public eye at the time.

After Drury Lane had closed its doors at the beginning of June Mrs. Jordan made a single appearance, her first but by no means her last, at Covent Garden. On June 16th, a charitable benefit was given for the widow and eight children of Fearon the actor, who had recently died. She played *The Country Girl* and was duly commended by the newspapers for her kindness in giving her services. It would scarcely be necessary to mention the latter fact, were it not that on more than one occasion some Press critic—a "mercenary," we may take it, of a rival actress—did not hesitate to insinuate that Mrs. Jordan insisted on making good terms for herself when appearing in the cause of charity. The accusation seems totally unfounded and certainly does not harmonize with her general reputation.

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* "To those who recollect her execution of the ballad commencing 'Since then I'm doom'd,'" says the *Public and Private Life*, "it would be superfluous to panegyrize, as her personification of the mischievous hero of the piece far outstripped all attempts at praise." Genest remarks, "This farce is poor stuff, but Mrs. Jordan by her acting made it popular."

The early biographers are silent as to the manner in which Mrs. Jordan spent the summer of 1790; and, owing to the excitement of a General Election, the newspapers do not devote their usual amount of space to dramatic affairs in the provinces. We do not even hear whether she played at Richmond in the off-season. Old John Edwin, for whom she had appeared the previous year, was dying, and it was his son who had a benefit at the theatre on the Green in August. As Mrs. Jordan's name is not announced in the advertisements, we may assume that she took no part. It is very likely, however, that she was seen there some time during the summer, as in the following year we find mention of her "favourite engagement at Richmond," and similar expressions. But it is not until the reopening of Drury Lane, for the last season at the old theatre, that she again comes under public notice, and then the record for a time is purely theatrical. It was for a short time rumoured that she was training her voice, so as to be able to take part in the oratorios which were a regular feature of the Drury Lane programme at Easter; but finally we are informed by the papers that "Mrs. Jordan seems very prudently to have declined assisting in the oratorios." She was very busy without such an increase to her work as would have been involved by this. The agreement which she now had could not be disregarded, and it left her little leisure.

During the winter she was seen in several new parts—in *The Intriguing Chambermaid*, in *Better Late than Never*,* in *The Greek Slave*, etc. *The Greek Slave*, an adaptation of *The Humorous Lieutenant*, was the piece chosen by her for her benefit, with *The Pannel* as the farce. The benefit was chiefly remarkable for an epilogue composed for her by her friend, Harry Bunbury. Among its lines were the following:

> How strange! methinks I hear a critic say,
> What, *she* the serious heroine of a play!
> The manager his want of sense evinces
> To pitch on *Hoydens* for the love of Princes!
> To trick out *Chambermaids* in awkward pomp—
> Horrid! to make a Princess of a *Romp*.

It is not to be wondered at that some have concluded that there was an actual topical allusion in the fourth and sixth lines of the above, and that the connection between the actress and the Duke of Clarence had already begun. This was not the case, however; the verses were curiously prophetic, but not inspired.* They would indeed have been startling, had they been written and delivered after the Duke had taken Mrs. Jordan under his protection. As it was, they created no particular sensation at the time, and it was not until later that a strange appositeness was discovered in them apart from their reference to the play.

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* Of *Better late than Never* the *Public Advertiser* says that it was "infinitely indebted to the admirable acting of Mrs. Jordan; never were the various powers of this fascinating performer exerted to greater advantage." The play did not run, being killed (Boaden tells us) by Dodd, one of the chief actors, who "always bestowed the whole tediousness of his author upon the audience."

Their utterance, however, only preceded by a few months the first approaches of the Duke. At the close of the Drury Lane season Mrs. Jordan paid a visit to the Birmingham neighbourhood; "skirring the country," says one of the papers, "and picking up a good deal of the loose cash of the country folks." Then on June 30th we read that "Little Pickle"—her favourite nickname at this period—"concludes her summer tour at Richmond, where she generally receives as much as answers the expenses annually of her little household establishment in that quarter."

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* Boaden makes answer to "female readers" who may arrive at a false conclusion, "Pray, madam, pay a little regard to chronology, and suspect anything rather than a want of good taste in the Jordan. . . . For the 'love of princes' you must wait awhile." The *Public and Private Life* says that the lines "seem as if in allusion to an event then, perhaps, on the tapis," but adduces no evidence to prove that the Clarence-Jordan affair was yet dreamt of. It does, indeed, quote (p. 41) a paragraph to show "the Duke of Clarence's early predilection for Mrs. Jordan"—

"We have reason to believe the desire of the *Twelfth Night* and the *Romp* at Drury Lane this evening proceeded from a certain personage who, as Shakespeare says,

Might put his wishes more into commands.

"Certainly the early attention which his Royal Highness was observed to pay to the performances of Mrs. Jordan reflects the greatest honour on his critical discernment."

No reference to the source of this paragraph is given, and the context appears to make its date some time towards the end of 1785; I have been unable to identify the evening. Possibly "his Royal Highness" here was really the Prince of Wales, not his twenty-year-old brother, then third-lieutenant of H.M.S. *Hebe.*

We know from the address on her letters that Mrs. Jordan's town residence was 14, Somerset Street, Portman Square. The "little household establishment" at Richmond was no doubt for her children, Frances, aged nine, and the offspring by Richard Ford. Now in 1789 the Duke of Clarence, on his elevation to that title, had been assigned the Lodge in Richmond Park as his country house. Clarence Lodge, as it was called, being damaged by a fire, the Duke temporarily hired a house on Richmond Terrace from a Mr. Ross. In March, 1791, he entered into negotiations with Lord Camelford for his villa at Petersham—Petersham Lodge—and with the aid of George III. became its purchaser for twelve thousand guineas. It was here, then, that he was living when Mrs. Jordan came to Richmond to play in July. And now beyond a doubt he began his suit of the fascinating actress. We do not hear how they met, but it was before her engagement at the theatre started. "Little Pickle has been *besieged* at Richmond," says the *Morning Post* of July 15th, "by a certain exalted youth, whom at present she has managed to keep at bay." This is apparently the earliest notice of the affair which was to become so famous. Seeing what close attention the *Post* always pays to Little Pickle's doings, we probably shall not err in dating the Duke's infatuation from now.

On July 20th was advertised the "First night of

Mrs. Jordan's engagement this season, at the Theatre Royal, Richmond Green, this evening." The plays were *The Country Girl* and *High Life Below Stairs*. In the second Mrs. Jordan herself did not act, but "Lady Bab (with the original song)" is Miss Francis, whom we may identify perhaps with her sister.

Allusive paragraphs became frequent after this. "We hear from Richmond," says one on the 23rd, "that an illustrious Youth has at length passed the *Ford*, yet is not likely to be *pickled* by a legal process." During or at the termination of the Richmond engagement, Mrs. Jordan consented to play in two benefit performances at the Haymarket, on July 26th and on August 2nd. At the second the Duke was among the audience. He came from Richmond, says the *Post*, merely to compliment Mrs. Jordan with his presence. "His Highness seems to have been for some time enamoured of Little Pickle's *playful frolics*." On the same day it is announced:

"The Duke of Clarence gives a *Fête* to all the Fashion of Richmond next Monday evening. The general rendezvous of the Town Visitors is to be at the Playhouse, preparatory to the Royal festivities. —*Little Pickle* is also to be of the party, and will probably entertain some of the company with her 'Yeo, yeo, yeo, Sir.'"*

The *fête* did not take place, the departure of Mrs. Jordan from town being perhaps the reason why the Duke postponed it. His offers, in whatever form they were conveyed, had not yet succeeded in shaking her allegiance to Ford. They encouraged her, however, to make urgent representations to that gentleman of the necessity of fulfilling his old promise to marry her, and for a time at least she must have been hopeful of success. "It is generally understood that Mrs. Jordan makes her first appearance next season in the character of Mrs. Ford," says the *Post* on August 16th; and, two days later, "Mrs. Jordan's first performance in the character of Mrs. Ford is among her most *exquisite* pieces of *acting*." Another paper* informs its readers that "Mrs. Jordan has withstood the unbounded offers of a certain personage; so much to her own credit, and to the satisfaction of a certain gentleman, to whom she has for some years *afforded* her smiles, that the latter has, from motives of gratitude and love introduced her as his *wife*, and in that character she has been received in the most fashionable circles."

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* One of the songs in *The Spoil'd Child*. It was set to the tune of "Melton Oysters," which we have heard of before in connection with Mrs. Jordan.

The love and gratitude of Richard Ford were not such as they were here represented. But he did not at once return a point-blank refusal to Mrs. Jordan's appeal. It was in his company and still bearing his name, except when in the theatre that she went north after playing at the Haymarket. Perhaps she did not this summer intend a regular northern tour—or "cruise," as she was fond of calling it, probably after her association with the nautical Duke—for she was in very poor health after the fatigues of the season, and was in addition pregnant again. But Wilkinson had written suggesting to her an engagement for the summer assize week at York, on shares, the same terms as Mrs. Siddons and Miss Farren had accepted from him, with a clear benefit on the Saturday night if she would play also on one night chosen by him in the following week, that of the York musical festival. She could not resist this offer, and when Wilkinson reached York he found her already there with Ford. But trouble began as soon as they met, and of a more serious nature than at Leeds two years before. Again we have only Wilkinson's version, so that we must not condemn the lady too harshly.

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* Quoted in *Public and Private Life*, without name or date.

Wilkinson had already advertised Mrs. Jordan in *The Country Girl* and *The Devil to Pay* on the opening night. She refused to undertake the second piece. "Her health was in so dangerous a state, and her spitting of blood from exertion was so frequent that she would not play Nell on the Monday." The manager reluctantly cancelled *The Devil to Pay*, knowing that the ladies of York considered *The Country Girl* "rude and vulgar." When Monday night came, his fears were justified. Although it was now six years since Mrs. Jordan had appeared at York, and in the interval she had become a London celebrity, there was no rage to see her and the boxes were not greatly taken. Mrs. Jordan, "in the devil of a humour," told Wilkinson that, had the audience possessed life or soul, she might have sung a song after *The Country Girl*. He begged her earnestly to do so to oblige him, and at last she consented—to such effect that she brought the house down.

Still matters did not go well during the assize week, the houses being poor and the actress displaying an indifference which looked like contempt Her Rosalind in *As You Like It* on the fourth night was not received in the manner to which she had been accustomed in London, and she showed her resentment. "When the applause sunk into more and more languor, she fell into a feeble vapour, and merely got through the part, very little better than would an actress of less renown. . . . So that when the night's entertainment was over it would have been a moot point to have decided whether the audience or the actress were the most tired."

Furiously, after the fall of the curtain, Mrs Jordan exclaimed that she had a double weight to carry on her shoulders, a stupid audience and a stupid company of actors. This naturally annoyed the company, while on the following day a thousand false stories were current in the town as to what she had said about York. That night another cold performance met with another cold reception. Lastly came the benefit night. Mrs. Jordan was "whimsical, good humoured and entertaining" at dinner before the show, but the sight of a thin audience—"the boxes genteel but not great, the other parts of the house but scattered"—soon drove away her good-humour, and she acted as indifferently as before. In the course of the evening she sent Wilkinson word she would not play on the York stage again. When he came to see her she spoke of the beggarly entertainment she had entered into and the dullness and lack of generosity of York audiences. Thereupon followed a quarrel, in which both used angry words, Wilkinson observing that she had no right to say that £150 was not worth receiving for one week's acting and "repeating merely a, b, c"—which was his opinion of her recent performances. He then left her, not without hopes of the clouds dispersing, as he knew her general good temper.

Wilkinson saw Ford also and spoke to him about a further engagement for Mrs. Jordan. That they were still treated as husband and wife is shown by the fact that they were expected to dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson on the Sunday. About midnight on Saturday, however, the manager received a letter from Ford, refusing on behalf of "Mrs. Ford" a further engagement and begging that she be excused from doing herself the pleasure of waiting upon him and Mrs. Wilkinson next day. She was "very unwell and much fatigued," and desired to spend a day or two in the country.

Fortunately for Wilkinson, John Kemble was at York at the time, stopping with his friend the Mayor. Late as it was, Wilkinson went round to him the same night and engaged him to play next week at the theatre. Kemble was due to act at Newcastle during the assize week, under his brother Stephen's management, but it was agreed to offer Mrs. Jordan to take his place at Newcastle. In the morning Kemble called upon the lady and induced her to accept this arrangement before she left for Castle Howard. It only remained to settle about the night promised by Mrs. Jordan in the musical festival week. Wilkinson sent a messenger after her, asking whether she would play for him on Tuesday or allow him thirty pounds instead. She wrote back at once:

"SIR,

"I agree with pleasure to your proposal of giving you thirty pounds, rather than ever perform in York. I shall return to-morrow and settle the balance of the account.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obliged humble servant,
"D. FORD."

On Monday she returned to York and paid over the thirty pounds. Wilkinson claims to have perceived that she "could not suppress an uneasiness, though she said she acted right; for she should be ruined as an actress if she was to play on to such a milk-and-water, spiritless audience." "That Mrs. Jordan was not received with that warmth her merit demanded was true," he continues; "but then had she been more complying, and not so gloomy and cursed cross, and never conveying the least endeavour or wish to please . . . things would have taken a more pleasant turn."

All this may seem very trivial; but the whole story has this value, that it gives an intimate picture of Mrs. Jordan in one of her disagreeable moods and corrects the unduly favourable portrait of her which her admirers conspired to paint.

Here we see her capricious, discontented, scornful of her audience. There is the excuse of her bad health. But she made her agreement with the York manager knowing how she felt, and could not expect to get out of it without pecuniary loss. Perhaps we may fairly look for an additional explanation of her conduct in the approaching end of her union with Ford.

The sequel to the York failure was even worse. The Newcastle engagement may truly be called a fiasco. Mrs. Jordan started from York on August 17th, expecting to open on the 22nd. She announced on her arrival that she would give *The Country Girl* and *The Devil to Pay* on the first night. But Stephen Kemble's company had not been consulted by John when he made the arrangement to exchange with Mrs. Jordan, and were not prepared for her plays. They refused to come from Lancaster to fulfil their engagement at Newcastle, and so left her stranded. "I do believe," says Wilkinson, "that month of August was the most mortifying she had then met with as a performer from her exaltation in 1785." It is not surprising to hear that she talked of damages and remained long in a state of agitation over her injuries. If she had exhibited caprice and bad temper at York*, at Newcastle she was certainly grossly ill-treated.

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* It may be noted that *The Secret of the Green Rooms* says of the York affair: "From some of the strict female moralists in that city she met with the greatest insults; they took a particular pride in affronting and mortifying her whom they denominated Mr. F—d's *Mistress*."

CHAPTER XI

FROM FUTURE MAGISTRATE TO FUTURE KING

WHEN Mrs. Jordan returned to town after her disagreeable experiences in the North she must have abandoned all hope of persuading Ford to carry out his promise. The Duke of Clarence recommenced his siege, and she determined to surrender upon the best terms which she could make. It is, no doubt, a sordid story of the transference of a mistress from London's future chief magistrate to England's future king; but the mistress does not deserve all the censure. Ford, though he received no direct pecuniary benefit from the transaction,* relieved himself of all responsibility for his illegitimate children, and of a connection of which, perhaps, he had tired; he resigned the lady, as Boaden says, with legal composure. The Duke bought for a price what he could not obtain otherwise and undertook certain obligations, about the fulfilment of which he may have been honest at the time but was certainly careless later. The actress treated herself as a chattel for the benefit of her family. There is no trace of romance in her going to the Duke of Clarence. But it would have been a romantic nature indeed which could have preserved its illusions about men after association with Daly and with Ford.

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* Watkins in *The Life and Times of William IV.* speaks of "the infamous bargain," and says that "Ford, in addition to other considerations, obtained a share in Drury Lane Theatre." I have found no confirmation of this statement.

The Drury Lane Company's season opened on September 20th, Mrs. Jordan appearing in *The Spoil'd Child*. Old Drury was in the hands of the house-breakers, and Sheridan had taken the Opera House or King's Theatre in the Haymarket until his new house should be built. Genest says of the Haymarket that it was "admirably calculated for equestrian performers, but not at all suited to the common actors or actresses, who appeared diminutive and were obliged to elevate their voices above the natural pitch in order to be heard." One of the critics observes that Mrs. Jordan could be heard particularly distinctly, "not so much because of the loudness of her voice as because of her always speaking distinctly."

On the 23rd the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Clarence, and "all the fashion in town," were observed at the Haymarket, where the last piece of the evening was *The Pannel*, with Mrs. Jordan as Beatrice. The Duke's presence was significant, and the journalists were on the watch. They had not long to wait. On October 11th the *Morning*

Post came out with the following, under the heading of "Elopement:"

"The comic Syren of the Old Drury has abandoned her *quondam* mate for the superior attractions of a *Royal* Lodge, to which little *Pickle* was long invited.

"This movement the Gossip Fame had for some time anticipated, but it was not until Saturday last [October 8th] that she quitted the comforts which a private situation could af-*ford.*

"She has in return all the solace which a new and elevated lover can bestow, with the added hope that history will record her attractions, and that she may be looked on as the Nell Gwyn of a future day."

Three days later under the same heading we read:

"A celebrated Actress, who has withdrawn from her late nominal Spouse, has not yet formed her Princely connection. The Lawyers are at present employed in drawing up the settlement. Her terms are £1,200 a year annuity, an equipage, and her children by *all parties* provided for. Her *ci-devant* friend has withdrawn himself from this favourite Daughter of Thalia, though no later than yesterday she offered to forego the *Princely* offers, if he would make her his *wedded* wife. This has been refused, and everything is now in preparation to gratify to the fullest the vanity of the *mock Princess!*

"Much has been done to prevent this connection from taking place. Anonymous letters in abundance have been written, it is said, by a rival Actress to prejudice the *Lover* against the frolicksome Comedian, as the jealous Lady herself has for some time looked up to a *Royal Conquest.*[*] But alas! none has been made, except among the Heroes of the Buskin."

"A *favourite comic actress*," says another paper, "if old Goody Rumour is to be trusted, has thought proper to put herself under the protection of a *distinguished Sailor*, who *dropped anchor* before her last summer at Richmond." According to yet another, "*Little Pickle's* assumed character of the *Tar* was a prelude only to her future nautical fame; for, though pressed into the service, she has consented, we find, to be close moored under the guns of the *Royal Commodore*."

As might be imagined, the public was not slow to take up the matter to which the society journalists devoted their witticisms. On October 18th, "in the after-piece of *The Devil to Pay*, Nell fell under the notice of the audience. When the Conjuror told her that she was to become 'a great Lady,' the clamorous laughter of the majority of her hearers followed her into her new situation." And next night, in *The Spoil'd Child*, "Mrs. Jordan excited some unwelcome merriment in the audience. The line:

> What girl but loves the merry Tar?

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[*] The allusion is elsewhere explained to be to "a pert and conceited actress" in the company, who had cocked her hat in vain at the Duke of York, just now married to the Princess Royal of Prussia.

was too apposite to her present situation to fail of the most whimsical effect."

The disadvantages of being so much in the public eye were evidently appreciated by Mrs. Jordan, and she hastened to anticipate certain criticisms—very unjust criticisms, it must be added—which were sure to be made with regard to her severance of relations with Ford. On October 19th, some of the editors published a statement introducing a couple of letters, which, they said, had been handed to them with the strongest assurance of their authenticity. The letters ran as follows:

Mr. Ford's Letter to Mrs. Jordan.

"Lest any insinuations should be circulated to the prejudice of Mrs. Jordan, in respect to her having behaved improperly towards her children in regard to pecuniary matters, I hereby declare that her conduct has in that particular been as laudable, generous, and as like a fond mother, as in her present situation it was possible to be. She has indeed given up for their use every sixpence she has been able to save from her theatrical profits; she has also engaged herself to allow them 550*l.* per annum; and at the same time settled 50*l.* a year upon her sister. It is but bare justice to her for me to assert this, as the father of those children.

"(Signed) RICHARD FORD.

"Oct. 14th, 1791."

To Mrs. Jordan.

"In gratitude for the care Mrs. Jordan has ever bestowed upon my children it is my consent and wish that she should, whenever she pleases, see and be with them, provided her visits are not attended by any circumstances which may be improper to them, or unpleasant to me.

"RICHARD FORD."

Three days after this the *Morning Post* printed a paragraph to the effect that the letters were not inserted with Ford's consent or even knowledge, having been written merely as a private satisfaction to the lady and not meant to be intruded upon the public. But it cannot be argued that Ford deserved much consideration at his late mistress's hands. The best that can be said for him is that he had the decency, after protesting against the publication of the letters, to withdraw himself from England for awhile. Before he left he continued to visit the Haymarket, as is shown by a piece of gossip in one of the morning papers early in December. "The Naval Officer," this states, "who infests the scenes of the Haymarket Theatre, to the annoyance of everyone that belongs to the house but one, had the modesty the other day to desire Mr. S[heridan] to forbid Mr. Ford the privilege of appearing behind the scenes. Mr. S[heridan] very properly told the naval officer that Mr. Ford's behaviour as a gentleman precluded such a prohibition; and that, in point of right, Mr. F. had as much pretention as himself."

Ford's departure from England is recorded by the *Public and Private Life of Mrs. Jordan*, which continues: "It is singular that the writer, then a youth, accompanied by his father, was in the packet-boat that conveyed Mr. Ford to France, and as far as we are enabled to call circumstances to our mind, the gentleman alluded to, whose only intercourse during the passage was with our parent, seemed to enjoy no very enviable state of mind, a fact that in some measure redounds to his credit, as an apathetic sentiment under similar circumstances must have stamped him altogether divested of the best feelings of humanity."

It is somewhat surprising that Ford should have been allowed by an admirer of Mrs. Jordan to have any claim to "the best feelings of humanity." But he had his friends who, after he went abroad, continued to annoy his former partner with misrepresentations of her conduct and tales of his grievances. Among others who appear to have espoused his side of the case were Sir Francis and Lady Lumm. The lady, as we know, had always "instilled into Mrs. Jordan's mind the absolute necessity of sticking to Mr. Ford." Now she and her husband announced that, however painful it might be to their feelings, they could no longer tolerate her as a visitor to their mansion. They are not recorded to have expressed any indignation against Ford for having palmed her off on their select parties as his wife.

Certainly, however, Mrs. Jordan left the Lumms little option but to strike her off their visiting-list, by the open way in which she displayed her conquest of the royal duke. On the night of October 22nd she "appeared for the first time in public with her illustrious Acquaintance," sitting in a box with him at the Haymarket after *The Country Girl* and by her badinage with him distracting attention from the second piece, *The Cave of Trophonius.* A few days later she was seen walking with him through Bond Street and St. James's—"Her Grace bearing her new dignities with becoming indifference." On most nights he was seen behind the curtain at the theatre, laughing and talking with her before the play; or her brother would be called to give imitations, for their amusement, of Signora Storace and the Italian dancers. Their "playful gambols" in the Duke's box afterwards aroused the anger of the *Morning Post* critic, who quoted:

> Her Grace tapt his chin, he seized her by the muff,
> For the play was all nonsense, the singing all stuff.

"Her Grace" and "the new Duchess" were the common nicknames now bestowed upon her. Messages must only be brought to her by her own servants, it was said, and they always spoke to her thus: "Your Grace's carriage is ready"—"Will Your Grace have your bed warmed to-night?"—"Your Grace's tailor waits below, to take the measure of a pair of breeches for Little Pickle." Her carriage (for which the crest of a *sea gull* was suggested) was attended by three footmen, and, "as she couldn't have scarlet and gold, ecod—there was green and silver in abundance!"

Sneering and abusive paragraphs appeared daily, of which the following are a few specimens taken from various sources:

"Should the Royal Tar be ordered abroad, *Little Pickle* swears he may swing in a hammoc by himself. Where the object has been *avarice* and *vanity*, there can be little *affection*."

"The conduct of a certain pair, in their journey to and from the *neighbourhood* of Richmond, is the *daily* occasion of a blush in everything on that road except the *mile-stones*."

"Mrs. Jordan receives a present of an enamelled gold ring with a diamond in centre, worth a hundred guineas. The *gentleman* won it of his Brother in a bet, which he had promised to pay (if won) to his 'better half.'"

"The *Duchess*, in a jealous fit, let out a reef of her tongue on Saturday night. The resolute *tar* buffetted the *storm* and produced a *calm*, after giving a broadside of *sink-me's* that if she did not *close hatches* he would bear down on every woman he saw for a month."

"*Little Pickle's* family will present a curious assemblage of infants. Irish, Scotch, and English, and probably Princes and Princesses."

The Duke is described as "the infatuated lover," "the dull and infatuated paramour," and accused of "reviving with cool cream the professional bronze of his fair one," while Jerry—the Prince of

Wales, who kindly patronised his brother's affair—sits and looks on. Worse still, he is to "act as Banker to Her Highness" and receive her salary weekly from the Haymarket treasurer. Concerning this, a versifier signing himself "Pindar Junior" writes on November 13th:

> As Jordan's high and mighty squire
> Her play-house profits deigns to skim;
> Some folks audaciously enquire,
> If *he* keeps *her*, or *she* keeps *him!*

Undoubtedly the Duke suffered more severely at the hands of the scurrilous paragraphers. But Mrs. Jordan's enemies, including the friends of Ford, did not confine themselves to censure of her new connection. They also insinuated that she was neglecting her professional duties for her private affairs. The public lent a certain amount of belief to this charge, and on November 26th there was a disturbance at the Haymarket. According to the account in the *European Magazine*, "the entertainment of *Richard Cœur de Lion* being intended for performance, an apology was made for the non-attendance of Mrs. Jordan, who was declared too much indisposed to perform that evening. This excuse being, as it seemed, suspected by some of the audience, a dissatisfaction appeared among them, which was only quieted by the substitution of Mrs. Crouch instead of Mrs. Jordan in the character [of Matilda]. In the ensuing week many paragraphs were inserted in the newspapers, charging Mrs. Jordan with want of respect to the public."* In response, the following letter, addressed to the several Editors, appeared in most of the public prints:

"Treasury Office, November 30, 1791.

"SIR,

"I have submitted in silence to the unprovoked and unmanly abuse which, for some time past, has been directed against me, because it has related to subjects about which the public could not be interested; but to an attack upon my conduct in my profession, and the charge of want of respect and gratitude to the public, I think it my duty to reply.

"Nothing can be more cruel and unfounded than the insinuation that I absented myself from the theatre on Saturday last from any other cause than inability, from illness, to sustain my part in the entertainment. I have ever been ready and proud to exert myself, to the utmost of my strength, to fulfil my engagements with the theatre and to manifest my respect for the audience; and no person can be more grateful for the indulgence and applause with which I have been constantly honoured. I would not obtrude upon the public an allusion to anything which does not relate to my profession, in which *alone*, I may without assumption say, I am accountable to them; but thus called on, in the present instance, there can be no impropriety in my answering those who have so ungenerously attacked me, that if they could drive me from that profession they would take from me the ONLY INCOME I have, or mean to possess, the whole earnings of which, upon the past, and one-half for the future, I have already settled upon my CHILDREN. Unjustly and cruelly traduced as I have been upon this subject, I trust that this short declaration will not be deemed impertinent; and, for the rest, I appeal with confidence to the justice and generosity of the public.

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* *European Magazine*, January, 1792. It is to be noted that the date here assigned to Mrs. Jordan's letter—November 30th, 1791—is right, Boaden and the author of the *Public and Private Life* both giving it incorrectly as 1790. The "Treasury Office" is that of the Haymarket Theatre, of course.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient servant,
"DOR. JORDAN."

This dignified and on the whole well written letter, which showed the writer's understanding of the manifold nature of the attack upon her, did not at once produce the desired effect. Mrs. Jordan returned to the theatre on December 10th to play Roxalana in *The Sultan*. With the general applause which welcomed her there were mingled some hostile demonstrations, which continued in spite of the efforts to drown them. At length the actress came forward to the front of the stage and, putting aside her agitation, said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I should conceive myself utterly unworthy of your favour if the slightest mark of public disapprobation did not affect me very sensibly. Since I have had the honour and the happiness to please you, it has been my constant endeavour by unremitting assiduity to merit your approbation. I beg leave to assure you, upon my honour, that I have never absented myself one minute from the duties of my profession but from real indisposition. Thus having invariably acted, I do consider myself under the public protection."

If this was an impromptu speech, as it appeared to be, it was certainly a skilful appeal to the audience of those days. It succeeded in its object, for there was no more dissatisfaction expressed. "A strange capricious master is the public," wrote Mrs. Siddons once to her friend Dr. Whalley. No one appreciated this better than Mrs. Siddons's rival; but, when she exerted herself, she knew well how to direct that caprice to her own advantage. On the present occasion Boaden, who was in the house, says that her manner was extremely good. "The little hardship which sat upon her brow and, like a cloud, kept back the comic smile that but waited their cheer to burst forth; the graceful obeisance that followed her complete triumph (for it was complete); and the mode in which she resumed her task to delight after she had personally suffered pain—as she trusted them all to Nature, so that steady friend did not fail her in the least."

Her troubles were by no means over, but it was not the theatre-going public that kept up the feud. The journalists, safe in their anonymity, were harder to deal with. Malicious paragraphs continued, for a time at least, so common that it would have required an industrious pen to answer them. She made some effort, or her friends made it on her behalf, to reply in a general fashion to certain accusations. "Among the ungenerous attempts which have been used to lower Mrs. Jordan in the public estimation," says one of these vindications, "may be ranked the insinuation that she has made a *mercenary* agreement with her present protector—admitting that the public had anything to do with the business; her calumniators, however, if they have erred through ignorance, must be covered with shame when they know that, although she has settled *half* her *future* income from her profession and *all* that she has saved in it, *upon her children*, she has absolutely rejected every idea of settlement or pecuniary aid for herself. Her independence is in her talents, the *unrivalled excellence* of which is undoubtedly the real cause of so much unmanly scurrility having lately appeared against her."*

It is said that at this period a legacy from a near relative of her mother, coupled with her professional earnings, brought Mrs. Jordan's income up to three thousand pounds a year. If she made thirty pounds every week in the year and a large additional sum by her benefits in town and country, there is still a considerable margin to be accounted for by the legacy, of which the extent is not known. It is difficult to resist the suspicion that this "legacy" was a term used to cover the annuity promised by the Duke of Clarence. Mrs. Jordan's partisans later hinted that this annuity, though legally settled upon her, was never actually paid.* It is time, however, to come to the character of the new protector to whom the actress had committed herself.

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* Quoted in *Public and Private Life*, p. 52. Another paragraph reproduced in the same place seems half attack, half defence. "It is said positively to be a fact," this runs, "that the actress whose *elevated connection* has lately engrossed so much newspaper comment has not *touched*, and is in little likelihood of obtaining aid from her new protector; and that besides her domestic support, to which her own salary contributes, she has only procured an annuity for her eldest child, for whom she is supposed to be indebted to an Irish manager of well-known gallantry."

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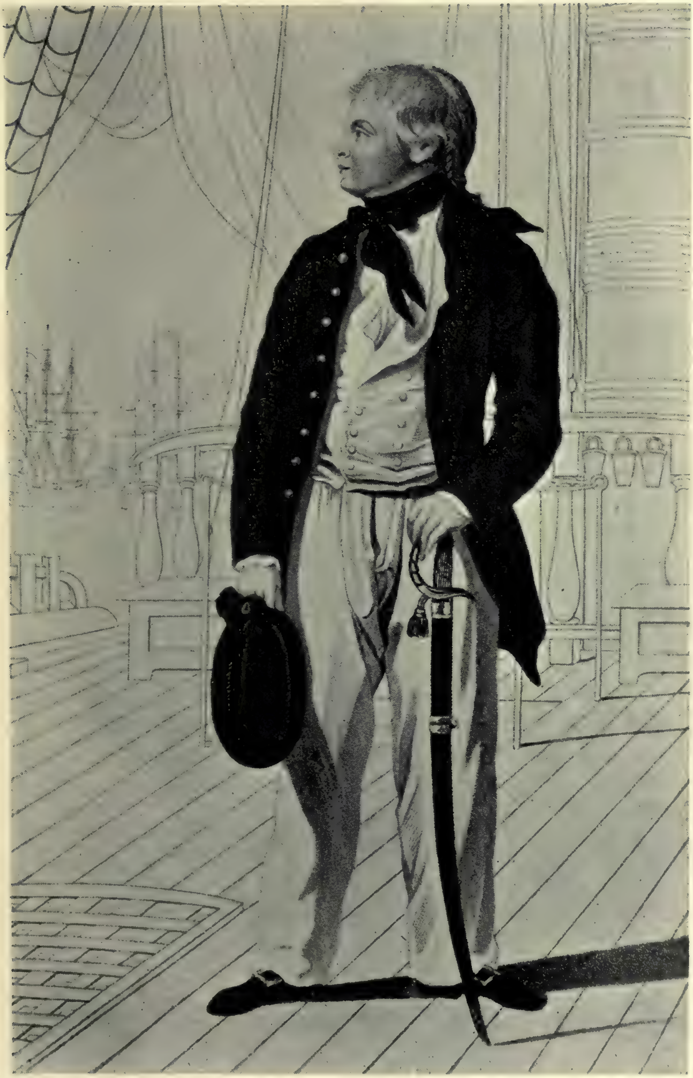
* "We do not pretend to infer that such settlement did not take place—that is to say, as far as the signing a legal instrument was concerned: but what avail sheets of parchment, with their seals annexed, and barren autographs? The technicalities of the law can neither create gold or stamp Bank paper!" (*Public and Private Life*, p. 29.)

CHAPTER XII

THE DUKE OF CLARENCE

WILLIAM HENRY, third son of George III. and Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, was born on August 21st, 1765, and was therefore younger—probably by three years—than Mrs. Jordan. Going to sea as a midshipman before he was fourteen and spending on active service nine years out of the eleven he was in the Navy, he escaped part of the abominable upbringing which fell to the lot of his brothers and turned some of them into as complete blackguards as ever royal father and mother were cursed with. George and his wife certainly paid a heavy penalty for their parental folly, which had a worse effect than even parental vice might have produced. We are tempted to imagine that they rendered their own particular virtues so unattractive that most of their sons and some at least of their daughters determined not to imitate them. There is a story that the boys were taught to do worsted-work. It would indeed have been well if they had never been taught to do worse. But they appear to have slipped through the



From an engraving by B. Page after a drawing by Benjamin West.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE WILLIAM HENRY
serving as a Midshipman on board the *Prince George*.

[*Facing p.* 174.

nursery-door into evil ways, past the purblind eyes of those who brought them into the world. Burns was justified in telling the King in 1786 (though later he would have had still more justification) that

Your royal nest, beneath your wing,
Is e'en right reft and clouted.*

It is unnecessary here to rake up again the scandals connected with the Prince of Wales and his brothers Frederick and Ernest, Dukes of York and Cumberland. Had they occurred a century earlier we should have had them held up in the text-books as awful examples of the depravity of the reigning family. Even as it is, our historians, with all their anxiety to impress on us what a crowning mercy was the expulsion of the Stuarts, find it necessary to abandon a large number of Brunswick infants to the wolves of moral criticism. We may readily admit, however, that the arch sin of making vice pretty was not to be charged against the family of George III. They made it revoltingly hideous, and unhappily the only foil to it was a crass stupidity, which was far from tonic in its effect upon public life. It was a golden age for the satirist; and a golden age, in another sense, for the corrupt politician and the venal pen-driver. That English literature survived through it is a tribute to the vitality of the literature. But the Court was no more the inspiration of good writing than of good living.* The Prince of Wales, indeed, although he is the apologists' first sacrifice to the wolves, had some literary taste to distinguish him from his kindred, and managed also to deck his amours occasionally with romantic tinsel, which can still be discerned amid the surrounding grossness—a harlequin rolling in the mud. The general picture of the time, however, is nauseating, and an humiliation to those who would think well of their ancestors.

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* *A Dream.* The stanza addressed to Prince William Henry—

"Young royal Tarry-breeks, I learn,
Ye've lately come athwart her—
A glorious galley, stem and stern,
Weel rigg'd for Venus' barter"—

has sometimes erroneously been supposed to allude to Mrs. Jordan; but the date of the *Dream's* publication disproves this. Nor, if Mrs. Jordan were the lady, would there be much point in the lines:

"But first hang out that she'll discern
Your hymeneal charter."

Prince William Henry, as has been said, avoided, through his service in the Navy, some of the evil surroundings which would otherwise have been his. He saw fighting against Spain and France, between 1780 and 1782, and indeed took part in it. He treated his duties seriously and gained the friendship of Nelson, for whom he had a strong admiration. His absences from work were only those of his profession, and there was little time for frivolity. A few, apparently harmless, escapades were recorded against him. As early as 1780, when enjoying his first leave in London, he is said to have fallen in love with a Miss Fortescue, whose age was sixteen, one year more than his own. But for the iniquitous Royal Marriage Act, one of his biographers absurdly states, he would have married her. The midshipman of fifteen could have done nothing of the sort; and King George very properly sent him back to sea at once. In 1783-5 he varied his naval service by travels on the Continent, during which time he had several small love-affairs. Perhaps this change of life rather unsettled him, for on the North American station in 1787, having some small grievance, he disobeyed an order to proceed to Quebec and brought his ship home to Plymouth. His father indignantly commanded him to remain there until further notice, a sentence alluded to by Wolcot ("Peter Pindar") in his *Brother Peter to Brother Tom*, where he speaks of Plymouth as

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* A writer in the American *Nation*, February 15th, 1912, well sums up the case when he says that "this court in which filial and paternal hatred was handed down from generation to generation like an inherited, malignant disease; in which vice was vulgar and virtue ridiculous; in which tedium was only relieved by petty spite or coarse brutality; which [under Queen Charlotte] deliberately surrounded itself by what was commonplace and insignificant, counts more in England's loss of intellectual prestige than is commonly believed."

> A town where, exiled by the Higher Powers,
> The Rural Tar with indignation lours,
> Kept by his Sire from London and from sin,
> To say his Catechism to Mistress Winn —

Mistress Winn, or Wynne, being a Plymouth merchant's daughter and one of the reigning beauties of the place, with whom gossip industriously associated the sailor prince's name.* His punishment, however, excited the sympathy of his brothers George and Frederick, who came down from London to visit him and with the aid of the local ladies and gentlemen managed to make part of his time pleasant with balls, excursions, etc.

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* A year earlier we find jests in the papers about "the roses of Plymouth and sweet William."

Eventually Prince William was sent back to his station, whence he did not return until the end of April, 1789. In the following month he was created Duke of Clarence and St. Andrew's, and Earl of Munster in the Kingdom of Ireland. Parliament voted him £12,000 a year to support the title, while the King assigned him and his household apartments in St. James's Palace and, as we have already heard, the Lodge at Richmond as a country house. He went to sea again with the Channel Fleet under Admiral Barrington, as war with Spain was expected. Matters being adjusted, however, his ship, the *Valiant*, was paid off with the rest, and the Prince retired from active naval service in 1790, with the rank of Rear-Admiral of the Blue Squadron. So it came about that he was a landsman and a resident in Richmond in the summer of 1791, when he succumbed to the attractions of "Little Pickle."

Having the reputation of being an officer attentive to his duties—even something of a martinet—and a really seamanlike character, the Duke of Clarence bade fair to be the most popular of the royal brothers. People read with delight, and believed, the tale of his encounter with the hated Madame Schwellenberg, life-long attendant and favourite of Queen Charlotte. The old German dame, it was said, entering a room where he was, promptly turned her back on him and retired. She came in again to say she had thought it was the Duke of York. "And suppose it was the Duke of York!" said Clarence, who was certainly much attached to his two elder brothers. He proceeded to administer a regular quarter-deck rebuke, which drove Madame Schwellenberg in fury to her mistress. The Duke was compelled to apologize for his language, but the mere fact of his daring to talk boldly to "the Schwellenberg," was counted greatly to his credit.

Pains were taken to show that the Duke was more than an honest, bluff sailor. In the *Public Advertiser* of April 10th, 1790, we read that "His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence deserves credit for the accurate manner in which he lives. He pays off all his tradesmen at the end of every month. By this means he never runs into debt, and as he games none he has always money at command to defray his expenses in a splendid manner, though his income is not a quarter part of many private noblemen. This mode of conduct will preserve to him the affections of his countrymen."

In spite of this testimony, however, there were rumours that the young Duke was following in his two elders' footsteps and contracting debts. Part of his father's anger in 1788 was supposed to have been caused by the discovery that he had overdrawn his money bills. When he came to live in town, it was soon seen that he had as strong a taste for expensive entertainments as the Prince of Wales or Duke of York; and an income which might appear to the unsophisticated sufficient to keep up a royal dukedom tolerably well proved inadequate to meet his expenditure. Accordingly he joined with the other two spendthrifts in the negotiations for the extraordinary Antwerp loan, which was to furnish the brothers with 3,600,000 guilders on the security of George's Duchy of Cornwall and Frederick's Bishopric of Osnaburg. This undignified transaction was stopped by the King—to the total loss of a great many bondholders, who had already paid over their money—and the princes were soundly rated, especially the Duke of Clarence, since he had not the excuse of the same huge debts as the others.

Deprived of the expected assistance of the Antwerp money, the Duke cannot therefore have been in a flourishing financial condition when he prevailed upon Mrs. Jordan to accept his protection. Whether it was £1,000 or £1,200 which he engaged himself to give her annually, he must have found it difficult to make good his promise even at the start. The story is wide-spread, but may be none the less apocryphal, of King George's advice to his son in the matter. "Clarence, Clarence, hey, how's this?" he is said to have asked. "You keep an actress, keep an actress, they say." "Yes, Sir." "Ah, how much do you give her, eh?" "A thousand a year, Sir." "A thousand? A thousand? Too much, too much! Five hundred quite enough, quite enough!" The tale continues that the Duke wrote to tell Mrs. Jordan what his father had said, whereon she tore off from the bottom of a play-bill the words, "No money returned after the rising of the curtain," and sent it to him.*

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* "Any person," says the *Public and Private Life*, "possessing a tithe of our knowledge of Mrs. Jordan's delicacy of sentiment would pronounce her wholly incapable of having made the indecent allusion referred to." The usual expression in the Drury Lane advertisement was simply: "No money to be returned."

From an engraving by H. Robinson after a painting by Sir William Beechy.

GEORGE THE THIRD.

[*Facing p.* 180

It would be unjust, on the strength of a foolish tale like this, and of attempts made by eulogists to represent the Duke of Clarence as careful in his household expenses, to attribute to him the meanness of making terms with Mrs. Jordan and then attempting to reduce the price. The Duke had, especially as he grew older, decided views as to the necessity of economy in public life, but his general reputation was that of a man accessible and good-natured to his friends. His worst fault was an extreme absence of tact, which, coupled with his vanity concerning his oratorical powers, drove him to making speeches of which the tedious length was redeemed, for some of the hearers, by the gross indiscretions they contained. His early training exaggerated his natural simplicity, which degenerated into vulgarity, Greville complains. The celebrated *Diary* abounds in sketches—artist's studies, we might call them—of William's character. Perhaps the most familiar is that at the time of his accession to the throne. "His life," says Greville, "had hitherto been passed in obscurity and neglect, in miserable poverty, surrounded by a numerous progeny of bastards, without consideration or friends, and he was ridiculous from his grotesque ways and little meddling curiosity." To soften the harshness of this verdict we may take another passage from the *Diary*, where the Duke's parental conduct is commended. "He brought up his numerous children," we are told, "with very tender affection; with them, and for them, he seemed entirely to live."

We must still leave for future consideration the question of the Duke's financial dealings with Mrs. Jordan. But it may be said here that there is nothing in what we know about him to induce us to believe that he could deliberately cheat a faithful and confiding woman.

The disgust which Cobbett felt (or at least expressed) at the publicity given to the Clarence-Jordan connection can be understood. It was not, however, the journalistic paragraphers who were alone to blame for this publicity. The principals in the affair were exceedingly open in their behaviour and appeared to invite rather than shun comment. We have seen some of the more or less unfriendly criticisms which they drew down upon themselves. Their well-wishers were often equally lacking in reticence. In a work from which we have quoted before, *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*,* there is this truly astonishing piece of adulation:

"Nor can the Royal Tar be blamed for selecting as his companion a woman of so rare a natural genius; and who, instead of forcing him into dissipation and folly, leads him to domestic life, to study, and improvement; who, if she may be somewhat expensive, prevents prodigality to a dangerous extent. . . . His conduct, both public and private, endears him to the whole neighbourhood, who do not regard his fair mate with much less esteem, as they know that it is impossible for her to be more honourably allied to him without breaking the sacred bar of an Act of Parliament. The Royal P[aren]ts cannot be displeased with his choice, since it is not, perhaps, agreeable that he yet should marry; and his attachment to study, together with his first essays as an Orator, give just reason to expect that he soon may become a Senator and Statesman of such splendid abilities as may reflect the greatest honour on the illustrious family of B[ru]n[swi]ck."

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* 3rd edition, 1792.

The allusion here to "the sacred bar of an Act of Parliament" is the second made in connection with the Duke of Clarence to the Royal Marriage Act; of the continued working of which we have seen an example this year in the necessity for the consent of His Majesty King George V. to the marriage of his kinsman Prince Ernst August of Cumberland to Princess Victoria Louise. George III. was driven to ask Parliament to pass the Act by the conduct of his brother Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland. Prevented from marrying one lady with whom his intrigue cost him £30,000 in damages to her husband, Lord Grosvenor, the Duke married a Mrs. Horton, widow of a country gentleman. This second escapade was considered so much worse than the first that the Duke was forbidden the Court, with his wife, and the Royal Marriage Act was forced through Parliament after hot debates in both Houses. The results of the Act were not what George III. hoped they would be. In the first place, the Duke of Gloucester made a public acknowledgment of his private marriage five years previously with the Dowager Countess of Waldegrave. And as for the King's sons, though the Act prevented them from making unwelcome marriages, it certainly encouraged them to form irregular connections which otherwise might have been given the blessing of the Church. As Watkins somewhat pompously expresses it in his *Life and Times of William IV.:*

"Precluded from following their inclinations in a choice so important as that of matrimony, some members of the Royal Family formed associations which were of so equivocal a nature as to excite some apprehensions respecting the succession. Others, that had nothing ambiguous about them, were, however, made so public that many persons, who were far enough from being precise, could not but feel concerned at the pernicious tendency of an example which set even the ordinary rules of decorum at defiance and claimed for the circle of royalty a similar privilege from the demands of virtue as the board of green-cloth possesses against civil arrest."

With regard to the Duke of Clarence, it cannot well be maintained that it needed the provisions of the Royal Marriage Act to prevent him from actually making Mrs. Jordan his wife. Even at the age of twenty-six he could scarcely leave out of his calculations the fact that only two lives then stood between him and the crown. Whatever sycophants might say at the time about the excellency of his choice of a partner, he could not disregard the possibility of ascending the throne, should he marry now, with an actress-wife who had borne children, irregularly, to two other men before him. The Duke was simple, let it be granted, but not so simple as to ignore what Fate might one day have in store for him.

CHAPTER XIII

A DOUBLE LIFE

WHEN Mrs. Jordan consented to accept the offer of the Duke of Clarence, she made no immediate break in her life. Some of her enemies professed great anxiety as to what, in the new circumstances, became of Mr. Ford's children. Such an enquiry came with particularly ill grace from friends of Ford. The actress had thought of her children before herself. As we have heard, her first care was to make a handsome settlement for her three little daughters.* She kept up her house in Somerset Street, and no doubt there they lived, in the company of her sister, since she could not take them to Petersham Lodge. All three girls seem now to have borne the name of Jordan, that of Ford being dropped for both Dora and Lucy.

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* There is some obscurity concerning the number of her children previous to her connection with the Duke. We know only of three births, and Boaden speaks only of the three girls, Frances, Dora, and Lucy. But the *Morning Post* of October 13th, 1791, says that "Mrs. Jordan has four children living, the boys she expects will be all Admirals in the British Navy." Various paragraphs allude to her expectation of a child in 1791. She was acting that year, however, scarcely without a rest, and it was not until August, 1792, that she was reported to be again a mother. An anonymous writer about the end of 1798 (see p. 209 below) explicitly states that there were four children previous to the birth of the first by the Duke of Clarence, thus supporting the *Morning Post;* but he does not give the sex of those by Ford. If there was a boy, there is no record of his birth or death—nor indeed, anything about him, within my knowledge.

Between the two homes and the theatre she divided her time. She continued to act at the Haymarket until the end of the 1791-2 season, taking her benefit on April 16th, in *The Country Girl* and a farce called *The Village Coquette.* The performance of Mrs. Jordan met with universal satisfaction, one of the dramatic critics states, and "the new entertainment was received with loud and reiterated peals of applause." She had only two other opportunities of appearing in anything new throughout the season, and for the most part she had to rest content with her old pieces, including *The Spoil'd Child*, which she played for the benefit of her sister-in-law.

In the summer she abandoned her usual tours. In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, under births in August, two announcements stand side by side:

"Mrs. Bland, of Drury Lane Theatre, of twins.

"Aug. 6th. At Petersham, the celebrated Mrs. Jordan, of the same theatre, a five months child, which died immediately."

"It was in the month of September following," says Boaden, "that she came to the play at Richmond to see Mrs. Litchfield, then a young actress, perform the part of Julia in *The Surrender of Calais.* She was so pleased with that lady's fine voice and spirited manner that she applauded her vehemently; indeed, so unguardedly as to break the gold chain to which a *royal portrait* was suspended and cause it to fall upon the stage from the box just over it."

It hardly needed an incident like this to keep alive the public appreciation of the fact that a favourite actress had been, for a time at least, distracted from her professional duties. The Drury Lane Company re-opened at the Haymarket in September, but nothing was seen of Mrs. Jordan now or for several months to come. Rumours of her intention of retiring from the stage (coupled with sarcastic tales of all the actresses in the Drury Lane Company studying up "Little Pickle's" parts) had been current the previous year, and had been met by statements from her friends that she would continue to perform, partly through her love of the profession, but chiefly to provide for her children. Now again the rumours went about. Some of the newspapers uttered complaints—to the indignation of the writer of *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, of which the third edition was published about this time. "Instead of being obliged to Newspapers," he says, "no Actress has been more harassed by them than Mrs. Jordan. They did all in their power to drive her from the Stage on account of her connection with the Duke of C——, and now that she does not perform they accuse her of ingratitude, of refusing to amuse *that Public* which a little month ago they pretended would *never suffer* her again to appear before them ! ! ! Can anything be more insulting to common justice, or to common sense ? "

It is quite true that Mrs. Jordan suffered much at the hands of the newspapers during her lifetime.* Nevertheless it was through their medium that her approaching return to the stage was heralded, the following letter, addressed to Sheridan, being published by some of them at her request:

"SIR,

"From the very handsome manner in which you acceded to my proposals, and, as I conceived, concluded my engagement, I flattered myself I should have no difficulty to encounter in immediately entering into my agreement with you—an event I have awaited for with increased anxiety, from the circumstance of having, through your liberality, been for some time in the receipt of a very large salary, without being permitted to perform.

"I am totally at a loss to account for the conduct of the manager in any other way than his *continued disinclination* to let me appear in any new character whatever—a complaint I have often been constrained to make to you; and you have as often acknowledged the justice of it, and, in our last negotiation, endeavoured effectually to remove, but without success.

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* A complaint from her about this is preserved in the 53rd volume of Anderdon's *Collectanea Biographica* in the British Museum. An undated extract from an autograph letter to the editor of the *Sun* runs as follows:—

"I have too much professional pride and too high an opinion of you to have offered them [tickets of admission] with any view to your future favors, and though nobody feels more keenly than I do the very unfair treatment I have received from the public press—I will cordially own that while it mortifies it feeds my vanity, as you and every person of liberality will allow that no performer has been or is (I hope) less dependant on them than myself . . ."

"As a duty I owe myself and the public, I mean to publish a copy of this letter, to serve as a simple but *fair* contradiction to some malicious reports that are circulated, insinuating that I have withdrawn myself from their protection, a circumstance I have every reason to be proud [of], of which I shall ever retain the most grateful remembrance, accompanied by the sincerest regret at being deprived of the happiness of manifesting, in the duties of my profession, the truth of this *assertion.* You, sir, I make no doubt, will candidly confess that I have already been too much tormented with regard to this engagement, and also that from this unnecessary delay in bringing forward the comedy, that it is now void; and when I assure you that my situation in the theatre has, for a considerable time, been made very irksome to me, and that should I attempt to continue in it, *out of respect to you*, I should subject myself to still greater perplexities, which it is not in your power to prevent; I am therefore confident that you will release me from that kind of embarrassment which the liberality of your conduct towards me makes me suffer in the justice of my wish to quit the *Haymarket theatre.*

"In complying with the above request you will greatly add to the favours already conferred on,

"Sir,
"Yours, etc.
"DORA JORDAN.

"Somerset Street,
"Jan. 29, 1793."

From this it is clear that she had come to some new arrangement with Sheridan with regard to her appearances at the Haymarket but had fallen out with Kemble again, so that while she was still drawing her salary she was giving nothing in return for it. What she had agreed with Sheridan does not appear, but the reason of her quarrel with Kemble is known. A certain Miss Cuthbertson wrote a comedy, *Anna*, with some aid from Mrs. Jordan. The actress wished to make her re-entry in this. Kemble objected strongly, calling for one of the old successes. (He "cared little for any comedy," says Boaden, "and for modern comedy not at all.") He threatened to resign if his advice was disregarded, but finally was over-ruled by Sheridan. *Anna* was produced on February 25th, and at once justified Kemble's attitude towards it; for it was a total failure and was not repeated, though Mrs. Jordan's acting at least was not to blame.*

After this it is not surprising that reliance was put in old pieces for Mrs. Jordan during most of the season's remainder, and no doubt Kemble deplored, like modern managers, the lack of good new plays. One was tried, *The Female Duellist*, which proved but a poor farce. Further, at her benefit on April 22nd, Mrs. Jordan played for the first time Lady Restless in *All in the Wrong.* Boaden is judicious in his criticism of her here. "I always thought this the case with the beautiful Mrs. Jordan when enveloped in the garments of a woman of fashion," he says—"a train, except of admirers, was a thing she had no skill in managing. Alert in every action, she kicked it hastily out of her way. She had not the height that may properly be said to command such an appendage. It wanted balance accordingly."

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* "The reappearance of Mrs. Jordan, added to the attraction usually inherent to a new production, drew together, as might be expected, an overflowing audience, at the first representation of the comedy of *Anna* last night. Mrs. Jordan was welcomed with every mark of good-will and approbation, and seemed to have lost nothing of her comic powers by an absence from the stage." (Press-cutting of February 26th, 1793, in a collection in the British Museum.)

We shall see hereafter that other critics liked our actress's "fine ladies" even less than Boaden.

Once more Mrs. Jordan's theatrical history was interrupted when the Drury Lane Company left the Haymarket in June, 1793. She was not one of those whom Colman engaged to fill up the gap in the following winter before new Drury Lane should open its doors. Nor did she take any part in the short first season at the new house, making her only appearance at a special benefit performance on July 2nd for the widows and children of those who had perished in Lord Howe's victory of the First of June. The Duke of Clarence had been much mortified by his father's refusal to allow him to go to sea again under Howe. According to Boaden, it was "with the hearty consent of her illustrious naval admirer," that Mrs. Jordan volunteered her aid in *The Country Girl* at the benefit. It must be admitted that this substituted service was rather quaint.

In the interval Mrs. Jordan had been leading a domestic life at Petersham Lodge. Here on January 16th, 1794, she gave birth to George Augustus Frederick Fitzclarence, afterwards Earl of Munster, the eldest of her large family by the Duke, always a great favourite with his mother and father alike—though, as a matter of fact, it may be said that they both displayed a warm affection for all their children. A curious picture is drawn of Mrs. Jordan about this period by the author of the *Public and Private Life.* "So unostentatious and truly domestic were her habits, after her new and exalted connection," he says, "that we have frequently witnessed her arrival, in a plain yellow chariot, at Miss Tuting's, a milliner in St. James's Street, when she would alight with an infant in her arms, and during her stay frequently change the linen of the little one in the shop, while freely conversing with the person in attendance to wait upon customers."

The same writer quotes from an unnamed biographical sketch of Mrs. Jordan some remarks, which probably refer to a somewhat later period but are nevertheless appropriate enough here, after we have seen the Duke and his mistress united by the bonds of a common parenthood:

"In private life Mrs. Jordan has the best opinion of the best characters. Towards the Duke she conducts herself in the most faithful and endearing manner. Neither superfluous in expenditure, nor extravagant in expectation, she lives as the nature of her connection will allow; and it may be said of her, what of many ladies *legally* connected cannot be said—

> "Tho' she boasts not the name, she's the truth of a wife.

"Unfriendly to the parade of a high life, she is contented to forego the wretched ostentation of less exalted minds for the tranquil pleasures of domestic retirement. She is a fond and tender mother, and with her children she loves to pass away those hours which might be less pleasantly expended in the delusions of fashionable life."

Although these are the words of a hot partisan, we nowhere find anything to contradict the general impression which they convey, stripped of the mere flourishes of speech. In her stage life Mrs. Jordan was capricious, restive against control, well aware of her merits, and, if never grasping on her own account, at least determined to secure as much as she could for the sake of those she held dear. Away from the stage she was a totally different woman, if we may credit the consensus of evidence about her private life; one whose ideal was the quiet content of a home. Her early mishap was a serious obstacle to her attainment of this ideal through marriage. She tried nevertheless to realise it in the company of the wretched Ford, who failed her. It cannot be pretended that her compact with the Duke of Clarence was, in origin, anything but an act of barter on her side. But she wrested it to a realisation of her ideal and made for herself a story to which we cannot deny the title of romance, though it lacks anything like a hero.

Thus her life had become a double one, running in two streams side by side, which seldom touched except in so far as her domestic affairs compelled her to absent herself occasionally from the stage. A few years later the absences became more frequent, from a cause which Boaden describes as "nearly annual." But during the Petersham period we only hear of one rest for as long as a month, at the beginning of 1796, when she had a second miscarriage. "She was naturally attacked by the malignant scribblers in another interest," says Boaden, "as refusing about £150 during her absence, from caprice! The fact is that her reappearance was regulated entirely by Dr. Warren."

It is curious that we find no mention of the births of either her eldest daughter by the Duke of Clarence or her second son Henry. Possibly one arrived in the summer of 1795, the other in 1797; but in both cases conjecture must take the place of certainty. When William IV. died the *Gentleman's Magazine* published a list of the Fitzclarence family, which was copied in various quarters later. In this list Sophia and Henry, both being dead, were inserted without dates of birth, and unfortunately the omission was not repaired by the copyists.*

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* In the list (*G. M.*, August, 1837) the family appear in the following order:—(1) Sophia; (2) George; (3) Henry; (4) Mary; (5) Frederick; (6) Elizabeth; (7) Adolphus; (8) Augusta; (9) Augustus; (10) Amelia. The eight who have dates of birth attached are in order of seniority, from which it might be inferred that Sophia was the first-born of all. But if so, in view of George's birth on January 16th, 1794, and the mishap of August, 1792, it is difficult to see when she could have been born. As for Henry, he died in India in 1817, with the rank of Captain, so that his birth must not be assigned to too late a date.

Mrs. Jordan's theatrical record during the middle part of her residence at Petersham may be dealt with briefly. One of the noteworthy productions of the 1794-5 season was that of "Perdita" Robinson's comedy *Nobody* on November 29th. In this the retired actress, whose permanent lameness made her very busy with her pen, indulged in much topical allusion. According to the story in her own *Memoirs*, she, and one of the actresses also, received letters previous to the opening night, promising that "*Nobody* should be damned"; and damned it was, the demonstration being started in the galleries by several persons whose liveries betrayed their employers and who were heard to declare that they had been sent to "do up *Nobody*," while distinguished ladies in other parts of the house hissed through their fans. On this occasion Mrs. Jordan lost her nerve. "One might have supposed Mrs. Robinson prescient of her fate by her epilogue," says Boaden, "for Mrs. Jordan hurried on to address the audience in the words following, 'Half-dead and scarce recovered from my fright.' Recovered! she was so far from being recovered that she only repeated twenty lines out of the epilogue that had no connection with each other; and the authoress was indignant with manager, actress, proprietor, and even the public for not embalming *Nobody*. . . . The piece was tried again, but who can revive the dead?"

Happily there was no other such fiasco during the season, and Mrs. Jordan added several new parts to her repertory, from Shakespeare's Helena (*All's Well*) to Jerningham's Miss Plinlimmon (*Welsh Heiress*) and Cumberland's Sabina Rosny (*First Love*). At her benefit in May she showed herself for the first time at Drury Lane in her old Yorkshire success, Patrick in *The Poor Soldier*; played Amanthis in *The Child of Nature* and the title-rôle of *The Old Maid;* and delivered an "Occasional Address" to the audience, who could not therefore complain that they had short measure on Mrs. Jordan's night. Nor did her activities end with her benefit, for she was acting right up to the time when the theatre closed for the summer.

In the following season she was equally busy, with the exception of the interval in January and February, 1796, to which allusion has already been made. Her principal new character before Christmas had been Julia in a revival of *The Surrender of Calais*, in which she had taken no part previously. On her return to the stage after her illness she had the rare experience of playing with Kemble. From the diverse nature of their talents, few pieces suited them both. Now on February 27th Wycherley's *Plain Dealer* gave them an opportunity, Mrs. Jordan being Fidelia and Kemble Manly. Boaden had an interesting conversation with the manager after the performance. Kemble told him that Mrs. Jordan was absolutely irresistible, using indeed the language of Sterne's Yorick: "It may seem ridiculous enough to a torpid heart—I could have taken her into my arms and cherished her, though it was in the open street, without blushing."

Although Kemble admitted that there had been a good deal of contest occasionally between him and Mrs. Jordan and that he had been accused of not sufficiently promoting her interest, Boaden considers that he had done more for Mrs. Jordan in the way of revival and alteration than for any other actress, not excluding his own sister. Unfortunately, before long, we shall find Kemble and Mrs. Jordan once more seriously at variance.

On April 2nd (the narrow escape from a more appropriate date was not allowed to pass without comment at the time) the celebrated imposture of *Vortigern* gave employment to Mrs. Jordan among others, she being Flavia—with a ballad specially forged for her by William Henry Ireland. The familiar tale need not be retold here; but in Ireland's *Confessions* there is an anecdote, which seems worth reproduction, of the submission of the fraud to the Duke of Clarence and his mistress.

"In consequence of the general astonishment and curiosity excited by the manuscripts," says their inventor, "His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence became desirous of inspecting the papers, which being intimated to Mr. Ireland, a time was fixed upon, when I was made of the party and with Mr. Samuel Ireland repaired to the apartments occupied by His Royal Highness in St. James's Palace. Having carefully inspected all the documents produced, the usual questions were put to me concerning the original discovery of the manuscripts, in which Mrs. Jordan also joined—when my former statements were, as usual, adhered to.

His Royal Highness, I perfectly remember, made numerous objections, and particularly to the redundancy of letters apparent throughout the papers. To every question, however, the answers were made as usual, and thus the doubts which arose in His Royal Highness's mind were obviated by Mr. Ireland. As the agreement for the *Vortigern* was then on the point of being signed, much conversation took place upon that subject, in the course of which His Royal Highness was so kind as to give Mr. Samuel Ireland many cautious hints. Respecting the language of the piece, as well as the plot and characters, numerous enquiries were made by Mrs. Jordan, as well as the Duke of Clarence."*

This appears to be the first mention of a visit by Mrs. Jordan to the Duke's apartments in the Stable Yard, St. James's, though the open way in which the lovers lived permits us to suppose that she had made many others.

Mrs. Jordan also received the young impostor at her own private house, and is thanked by him in the *Confessions* for her particular kindness and affability then, "as also for her complacency and condescension during my long continuance in the green-room of the theatre on the representation of my play." Reanimating expressions, he says, continually flowed from her lips in order to rouse him from the mental depression under which he so obviously laboured on the eventful occasion! But when, after acting Flavia with exquisite simplicity, it came to her turn to speak the epilogue, Boaden tells us, she was "extremely frightened at the dreadful noise in the court," though she struggled bravely amid the public indignation and kept her presence of mind better than at the disastrous production of *Nobody* the previous season.

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* The author of the *Public and Private Life* scouts the idea that the Duke of Clarence could have known anything about the spelling in Shakespeare's days, and continues: "The simple fact is, Master Ireland, you were desirous of hoaxing anew, by giving perspicuity to a brain wherewith you felt fully aware it was not imbued." There is, of course, no reason why the Duke should not have read some of the arguments against the spelling of the forgeries. But the *Public and Private Life* adheres obstinately to the "Silly Billy" view of the Duke's character.

In her behaviour toward young Ireland Mrs. Jordan showed her usual kindheartedness, and in her acting as Flavia her loyalty to the theatre—whatever light her presumable acceptance of *Vortigern* as genuine may be considered to throw upon her literary discrimination. Kemble, on the other hand, thought *Vortigern* spurious, and though he undertook the title-part, exerted himself in no way to save the piece. So annoyed was he at the notoriety of the disaster, however, that it required little more to make him throw up his position as manager. For the little more he had not long to wait. When the time for benefits drew near, both he and Mrs. Jordan pitched upon *Hamlet*. She was anxious to see herself as Ophelia. But Kemble's benefit came first, and he had already advertised the play when she announced that it was her choice. Neither would give way, and Sheridan, on being called in as arbitrator, could think of no solution but to refuse it to both. Thereupon Kemble resigned the managership and an acute controversy arose, in which the journalists took their share. Mrs. Jordan's admirers were already indignant that she had been involved in the conspicuous failure of April 2nd and assailed Kemble now with little regard to justice. One of the bitterest attacks was in a letter sent to the Press with the signature of "Miso Puff."

"Kemble," says the writer, "can never stand in the first rank of favourites till he evinces greater abilities and less self-conceit. Before that period arrives he will constantly meet with mortifications whenever he contends with a performer of Mrs. Jordan's merits, who is singly capable of supporting the interests of a theatre, as he has himself most injudiciously proved by placing her perpetually in situations where all around her were drawbacks, instead of assistants. . . . Next to professional talents, professional humility and a zeal for the gratification of those to whom they owe their very existence will always be the greatest recommendation. In this particular, as well as in many others, Mrs. Jordan appears to me to exceed almost all her contemporaries,* while Mr. Kemble is as notoriously blamable for the reverse. . . . The play [*Vortigern*] having once been accepted by the proprietors and eagerly expected by the world, what could be more indecorous, to say nothing worse (considering from whom and for what he receives a large salary) than the behaviour of Mr. Kemble throughout ? Nor could a more striking contrast to his overweening fastidiousness possibly be exhibited than in the deportment of Mrs. Powell and the inimitable actress, his jealousy of whom has occasioned the present stricture."

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* Was "Miso Puff," perchance, but a variation of Sheridan's famous character in *The Critic?* "I dare say, now, you conceive half the very civil paragraphs and advertisements you see to be written by the parties concerned, or their friends? No such thing: nine out of ten manufactured by me in the way of business!"

In conclusion, the writer scoffs at the clumsy misrepresentation in a statement made of "the loss likely to be sustained by the lovers of the drama in consequence, forsooth, of this fracas" between Kemble and Mrs. Jordan. "A long list of performers is pompously held forth as following Mr. Kemble into retirement upon this, his threatened secession—whereas, most unfortunately, not only all those who frequent the theatre but all who cast their eye upon a newspaper have repeatedly been informed that every individual of that list has for some time past resolved upon quitting the stage at the conclusion of the present season, and that too before *Hamlet* (which, it seems, was the bone of contention) was even put into rehearsal."

Kemble substituted *Coriolanus*, Mrs. Jordan *Romeo and Juliet*, for *Hamlet.* Mrs. Jordan's choice seems a peculiar one for "the first tear-cap upon the stage." A friendly critic observes of her Juliet: "Mrs. Jordan, in every touch of delicate sensibility in her performances, has been so accustomed to approbation that it was natural enough she should attempt the most delicate of all characters, that of Juliet; but, beautiful and unequalled as she is on such occasions, the brilliancy is heightened only by the shade that surrounds it; in Juliet all is elegant refinement, while her *forte* is mere simplicity, not rude but untaught. Her figure and features are not those of the 'great Capulet's daughter'—still she showed us much to admire."*

The benefit night was April 25th. Three days later *Romeo and Juliet* was repeated, which is a sufficient testimony to the approval by the audience of the new Juliet. On the 29th, when *Hamlet* was played, for King's benefit, Mrs. Jordan had her wish to appear as Ophelia gratified, Mrs. Siddons on the same night representing Gertrude.

The season of 1795-6, in which we have noted all Mrs. Jordan's new characters, came to an end in mid-June. It had certainly been eventful, but could not be called satisfactory to anyone concerned with Drury Lane. Kemble had thrown up his managerial work, several well-known actors retired (through old age, it is true), and Miss Farren was threatening to leave. Discontent was widespread, and not unnaturally, since we hear that salaries were not paid up, while great sums were lavished upon the mounting of plays, of which Kemble always made a great point. Moreover, what could be expected in a theatre of which Sheridan was a proprietor? On one occasion he is said to have been assailed by a crowd of scene-shifters, carpenters, etc., with cries of "For God's sake, Mr. Sheridan, pay us our wages!" "In

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* Quoted in *Public and Private Life*, p. 58, from a paper to which the incorrect date of April 20th (? 30th) is assigned.

Heaven's name let us have something this week!" "Certainly, certainly, my good people, you shall be attended to directly," he replied. Then, walking into the treasury, he swept it bare and slipped out of the theatre by another door.

Mrs. Jordan got her money pretty regularly, Boaden believes. It would have been very unjust had she not, seeing how little her successes owed to the accessories. "Give her a good comedy and a pleasant farce, a little novelty and fair play, and she could *laugh* her way through a season," says her biographer. "She had a powerful friend, moreover, who would not allow her to be trifled with; a sort of friendship which secured for the noble patron the steady aversion which in a certain quarter was always manifested at the very sound of his name."

But, if her salary was safe, Mrs. Jordan was not secure from a multitude of vexations in her position at Drury Lane; and we should imagine that she escaped with relief from them to the domestic calm of Petersham in June. She was not able, however, to shake off the fascination of the stage even during the recess, for she appeared at the Richmond Theatre, where the public acquaintance with the other side of her life assuredly did not tend to diminish her audiences.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MOVE TO BUSHEY PARK

WHATEVER was the effect of the establishment at Petersham upon the outside world —and it is difficult to believe that at such a period it really had any public influence, in spite of the efforts of some persons to make political capital out of it—it certainly induced the Duke of Clarence to lead a regular life; a life, indeed, which shone with virtue in comparison with those of some of his brothers. And perhaps this life was not altogether useless, though we need not echo the fulsome praise of those who wrote at a later date histories of "England's Patriot King." The Duke kept up his interest on shore, since he was not allowed to join at sea, in the doings of the Navy, and his support, such as it was, seems generally to have been given where it was due. His admiration for Nelson continued unabated, and they maintained a constant friendly correspondence while Nelson was away from home. His speeches on naval subjects in the House of Lords, however, were not valuable

From an engraving by W. Taylor after a drawing by T. Allom.

THE LODGE, BUSHEY PARK.

[*Facing p.* 204.

contributions to the clarity of debate, delighted as his flatterers professed to be with his oratorical achievements.

It would be interesting to hear what comments George III. and his wife passed on their third son's connection with Mrs. Jordan; but we never meet with any beyond the probably spurious opinion attributed to the King concerning the monetary value of the lady. They might well have been grateful to her for being what she was, and, apart from her first small displays of the pride of conquest, bringing as little notoriety upon her protector as was possible in a situation of the kind. Such gratitude, however, was scarcely to be expected, in the nature of things, and we may wonder whether the obstinate refusal of George III. to allow the Duke of Clarence to see active service again was in any way connected with his disapproval of the *liaison*. The Duke was certainly eager to do something for his country, but his entreaties only met with cold disregard.

The relations between George and his third son, though destined to become more strained, were even now far from cordial, yet we know of no particular fault which the Duke had committed beyond the two of retaining his affection for his eldest brother and of making Mrs. Jordan his wife in all but name.

With one insignificant honour the Duke of Clarence was obliged to content himself. In January, 1797, Anne Dowager Countess of Guilford, widow of "Lord North," as he is always called in history, died. With her decease there fell vacant the rangership of Bushey Park, which she had nominally exercised. It was granted to the Duke, and he proceeded to remove his family from Petersham to the Lodge at Bushey. On his accession William IV. bestowed the rangership upon his Queen and went to make a short stay with her at the Lodge, then renamed Queen's Lodge. It was then fourteen years ago since Mrs. Jordan had died, a broken exile in Paris; but there was Colonel George Fitzclarence, Equerry to the King, at his father's side to remind him (if he needed to be reminded) of the distant day when first he entered upon his estate at Bushey, not with Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen, but with "Thalia"—"The Child of Nature"—"The Romp."

During the theatrical season preceding the move to Bushey Park there had been little of note in Mrs. Jordan's stage-life. Wroughton had been appointed manager at Drury Lane in place of Kemble, but this only brought about more irregularity in the treasury; for if Kemble, with his scrupulous character, could not guarantee the company due payment of their salaries no one else could. Recourse was had to ballet in the hope of improving the finances of the house, and there was no lack of variety in the winter programme. Nevertheless, Drury Lane continued to decline. Mrs. Jordan gained little from the change of management, her new parts being exceedingly few. One of these, however, is interesting to us nowadays, that of Lady Teazle, in which she was seen for the first time * at her benefit on May 29th, 1797. Hitherto Elizabeth Farren had long been Drury Lane's Lady Teazle; on April 8th she bade farewell to the stage in the part, going to be married to her constant admirer, the Earl of Derby. Genest's opinion is that the retirement of Miss Farren, "one of the most elegant actresses that ever graced a theatre and the best representative of a fine lady," was an unfortunate circumstance for Mrs. Jordan, "as it enabled her to throw herself into a line of acting for which she was not qualified." Boaden also regrets that, through her only comic rival being promoted out of her way, Mrs. Jordan's range of characters was extended beyond her best powers. But he considers her Lady Teazle meritorious, if compared with the printed play rather than with her predecessors in the part, such as Mrs. Abington, the original creator.

In June Mrs. Jordan made two appearances for charity at Covent Garden on the 13th and 14th. On the second of these occasions the Prince of Wales was the patron, and the proceeds were given to the widows and orphans of those killed at Admiral Jervis's victory over the Spanish off Cape St. Vincent four months previously. Mrs. Jordan played *The Country Girl*, and Boaden takes the opportunity of pointing out how ready she always was to give her services free, being "a full and perfect contrast to those whose service was always to be paid, though exerted even for a relation"—an allusion of which the point is not clear, though it was doubtless appreciated by his contemporaries. He records about the same time her charitable subscription of ten pounds to the dying Macklin.

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* For the first time in London, that is to say; for she had already played it, as we have heard, in her apprentice-days in the York Company.

In the summer of 1797 Mrs. Jordan not only played at Richmond, but began also a new connection with Margate, where eighteen years later she was to make her last appearance on any stage. Her terms for such an engagement as that at Margate were £180 for six nights and a clear benefit. Thirty pounds for one night, we have seen, had been the value put upon her appearance at the time of her quarrel with Wilkinson in 1791, and may be taken as the normal pay for a leading "star" of those days in the provinces. It was also, it will be remembered, Mrs. Siddons's remuneration for a single appearance at Drury Lane, when, under her brother's management, she ceased to play regularly for a fixed salary.

The migration to Bushey Lodge brought with it little change in Mrs. Jordan's manner of life for some years. Whether or not the Duke of Clarence was yet pressing her to retire from the stage, she did not do so, except for brief, necessary intervals, until another eight years had passed. The first of these intervals was early in the season of 1798-9, and is explained by an announcement in the Births column in the *Gentleman's Magazine:* "Nov. 19th. At Bushey Park Lodge, Mrs. Jordan, of Drury Lane Theatre, a daughter." This daughter was Mary Fitzclarence, fourth of the children of the Duke of Clarence. A very curious biographical notice, which appeared anonymously about the end of 1798, gives some details about the young family which are interesting:

"Mrs. Jordan has seven children living; at the period in question she has only three children by the Duke of Clarence. The eldest, who is a fine accomplished girl, about fourteen, is the offspring of Mr. Daly, the late Irish manager. She passes by the name of Miss Jordan. She has three more by Mr. Ford, who also pass by the same name, and three more, a boy and two girls by the Duke, who were christened by the name of Fitzclarence. They are all under the care and education (together with Miss Jordan, a sister of our heroine's) of the Reverend M. Lloyd, at Ewell, chaplain to His Grace, who receives from Mrs. Jordan the yearly sum of £400 for their maintenance and instruction." *

The same writer—having previously expressed the opinion that "Mrs. Jordan, in the view of a *fashionable Cyprian*, claims a fair and honourable distinction" in that, "though always a *mistress*, still she has invariably acted up to the rigid principles of a *wife*," and "has never been lavish in her favours, but uniformly true and constant to the man she has lived with"—concludes with some words which must have been very comforting for the poor Cyprian to read:

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* Quoted in *Public and Private Life*, p. 112. If the generally accepted list of the Fitzclarence family is correct in its order, then the above account is inaccurate, for by this time Mrs. Jordan must have had two boys by the Duke—and if it was written after Mary Fitzclarence's birth, four children in all by him.

"As a mother, Mrs. Jordan will behold her children anxiously and attentively watching over her declining powers, blessing herself, as she surveys their fondness and affection, that fortune and her prudence have rendered them thus cheerful, happy, and independent. The noble sentiments flowing from a liberal education will teach them to reverence the mother without sprinkling the tender nomination (!) with any unworthy reflections on the *father*. And the base, ungenerous tongue that ignorantly reflects upon their own birth, that education will teach them to despise, whilst if necessary it will also teach them to resent and chastise. The sense ingrafted in their youthful minds by the liberal and Christian principles of a *Lloyd* will likewise teach them that one Being is the Great and Universal Parent of Mankind, and that Being will instruct them that, next to Him, they owe all their love and homage to a fond, a tender, and ever anxious mother."

It is a little sad that we should be unable to do the author of these chaste and beautiful sentiments the honour of recording his name.

We get a glimpse of Mrs. Jordan in domestic surroundings about the same period, at her house in Somerset Street. Boaden had made her acquaintance in the spring of 1797, when "without ceremony," as he says, she introduced herself to him, writing to him for advice upon some professional points—for he had some reputation as a dramatist and critic. He visited her and saw her young family about her. Again, early in 1799 he went to her town-house, after having read at her request a new comedy entitled *The Secret*, in which she contemplated appearing at Drury Lane. "I gave her my opinion frankly," says Boaden, "and pointed out the indecorum of the interest." (The story was certainly complicated and peculiar, though, as Mrs. Jordan remarked, all this was quite *usual* on the stage, whatever the world might say of it!) "However, though not a moral play, it was written evidently by a man of talent. Mrs. Jordan here, in confidence, informed me that the Duke had taken the trouble to read it, at her desire also, and that we agreed most *decisively* in our opinions. She was in charming spirits, I remember, that morning, and occasionally ran over the strings of her guitar. Her young family were playing about us, and the present Colonel George Fitzclarence, then a child, amused me much with his spirit and strength. He attacked me as his mother told his fine-tempered father was accustomed to permit him to do *himself*. He was certainly an infant Hercules."

The picture, it must be admitted, is a pleasant one and tends to inspire us with some liking for the Duke of Clarence at this period, even if Boaden's obvious attitude of reverence, like his italics, provokes a smile. We must suppose Mrs. Jordan's lot to have been happy now, if ever it was. Calumny was not dead—it never died while Mrs. Jordan lived—but had little power to harm her at the moment. Both her public and her private positions seemed secure, and the attentions of the Press ceased to force from her indignant protests. For the next few years the course of her existence ran smoothly and with little to mark it except the occasional production of a new play—or a new child.

CHAPTER XV

MAINLY THEATRICAL

FOR the next nine years after her installation as mistress of Bushey Lodge, Mrs. Jordan's history contains little that is not, directly or indirectly, connected with the stage. Of necessity, therefore, the immediately following pages will concern themselves more closely with her theatrical record than does the remainder of the book. But, even so, they will not attempt to describe in detail her stage triumphs, and experiences, but only to note the points which have more than a merely professional interest.

The season of 1797-8 was the busiest for Mrs. Jordan during the whole of her engagement at Drury Lane. She appeared in no less than ten new parts, in addition to that of Adelaide in *The Count of Narbonne*, which she had played under Daly in Dublin, but never yet in London; she gave it now at her own benefit, supported by Stephen and Charles Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, a rare combination indeed. Two Shakespearean characters—Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing* and Miranda in *The Tempest*—were undertaken by her for the first time. The success of the winter, however, was a romantic drama by "Monk" Lewis, called *The Castle Spectre*—a preposterous affair, but evidently suited to the taste of audiences of the day,* for it was seen forty-seven times before the season came to an end. Boaden describes the appearance of the ghost, which made the play so popular:

"The set scene in this theatre had an oratory with a perforated door of pure Gothic, over which was a window of rich tracery, and Mrs. Jordan, who played Angela, being on the stage, a brilliant illumination suddenly took place, and the doors of the oratory opened. The light was perfectly celestial, and a majestic and lovely, but melancholy image stood before us. At this moment, in a low but sweet and thrilling harmony, the band played the strain of Jomelli's *Chaconne*. . . . The figure began slowly to advance; it was the spirit of Angela's mother, Mrs. Powell in all her beauty, with long sweeping envelopments attached to the wrist; and picture assuredly has never approached the effect, though it may have suggested it. Mrs. Jordan *cowered* down motionless with terror, and Mrs. Powell bent over her prostrate daughter in maternal benediction. In a few minutes she entered the oratory again, the doors closed, and darkness once more enveloped the heroine and the scene."

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* Sheridan appears to have had no illusions as to the real merits of *The Castle Spectre*. About the end of the season he had some dispute with Lewis in the green-room of Drury Lane. Lewis offered to bet all the money which the play had brought in, that he was right. "No," retorted Sheridan, "I cannot afford to bet so much. But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll bet you all it's worth!"

From the introduction of Lewis's drama on December 14th, until the arrival of *The Stranger* on March 24th, with Mrs. Siddons as Mrs. Haller, Mrs. Jordan played every night; for, as Boaden says, when *The Castle Spectre* was not performed, *The Country Girl* or *The Confederacy* called her out, or she supported Reynolds's comedy, *The Will*. The success of Mrs. Siddons's tears in *The Stranger* brought her rival some opportunity for rest; but before the end of the season Mrs. Jordan was busy again, and the closing performance was the *Spectre's* forty-seventh repetition.

There was no "cruise" this summer further than to Richmond, owing to the approaching birth of Mary Fitzclarence, and for the same reason, after a charitable appearance at the benefit for John Palmer's orphans in mid-September, Mrs. Jordan retired to the privacy of Bushey Park, leaving to other members of the Drury Lane Company her favourite parts. Not rejoining her companions until the end of January, 1799, she played few new characters this year. They included, however, Cora in *Pizarro*, the adaptation from Kotzebue by which Sheridan, after so long a retirement from the profession of dramatist, endeavoured to get money into the treasury of his theatre. As *Pizarro* was played thirty-one times and was estimated to have brought in £15,000, he was certainly successful. But he was far from contented with his Cora, or at first indeed with his Elvira—Mrs. Siddons. One of those present on the third night describes him as in the utmost ill-humour, almost stamping with anger in his private box at everything Mrs. Jordan said. "With everything Kemble uttered he was invariably delighted, clapping his hands with pleasure like a child. With some passages by Mrs. Siddons he was charmed, at others he was shocked."*

The birth of her third son Frederick Fitzclarence in December, 1799, cut Mrs. Jordan's next season even shorter than the preceding, for it was not until April 16th that she reappeared as Rosalind. Her most interesting new character was Miss Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer* on May 21st—a part which one would have thought suited to her genius, though for some reason it does not seem to have attracted her greatly. Her only creations were Emily in *Children* (which one critic calls "a dramatic abortion") and Julia in *Indiscretion.* In neither case could she save a poor play.

The most notable night for Mrs. Jordan this season was not one on which she was seen in a new character. On May 15th she was only called

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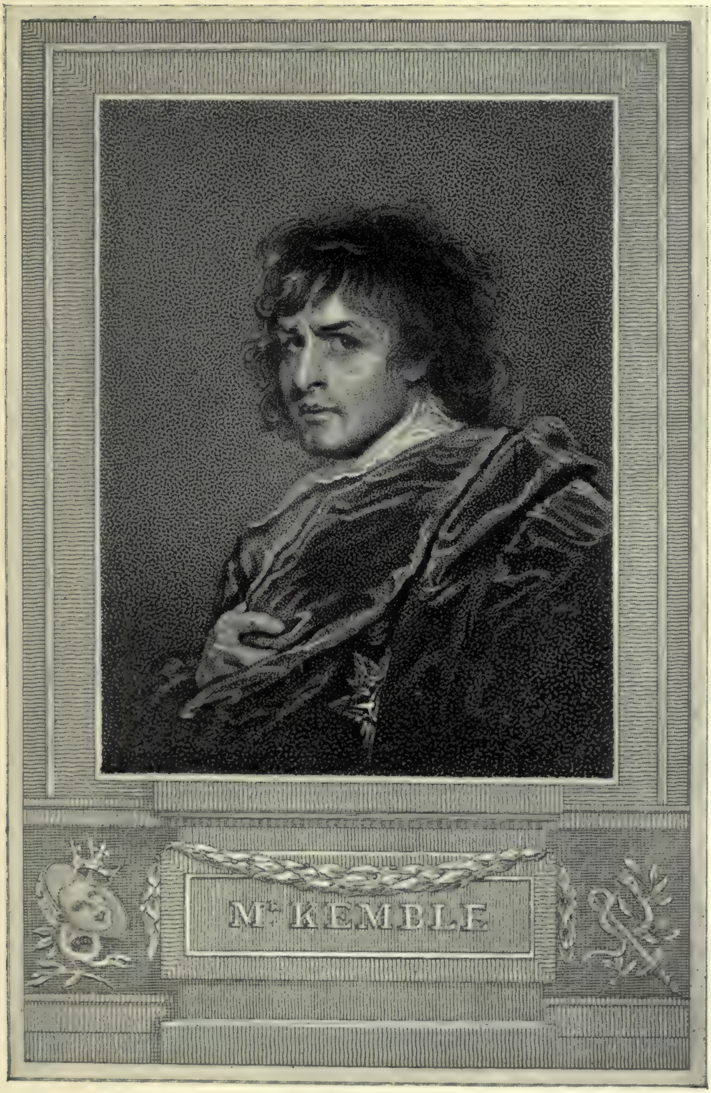
* "Mr. Stuart, of Upper Harley Street," quoted by Boaden, II., 16-8. Boaden defends his heroine. The fact is, he says, that Sheridan's ear was made up to the artificial cadence in the drama, and his declamation was of the old school. "Accordingly a natural actress like Mrs. Jordan was all abroad in this *antithetic* and *pointed* speech; it did not suit her manner, and was against her judgement or her feeling, whichever you call it; and in Sheridan's opinion, which I know was a sincere one, she could not 'speak a line' of Cora. But she felt the situation keenly, and played with as much zeal as could be wished."



From an engraving by Meyer after a painting by G. C. Stuart.

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE.

[*Facing p.* 216.

on to represent Hypolita in *She Would and She Would Not*, which formed the first part of the bill. The King and Queen were present, accompanied by the Princesses Augusta, Elizabeth, Mary, and Amelia (Boaden informs us that "the Princesses were naturally anxious to see Mrs. Jordan in particular, who had appeared to justify a permanent attachment in one so dear and to retain his respect, as well as his affection"!). Already once during the day the King had had a narrow escape from being shot, by an accidental discharge of a ball cartridge at a review in Hyde Park. Now at Drury Lane, just as he was entering the royal box, the crazy James Hadfield made himself for a brief while famous by firing a horse-pistol from the pit. It is by no means certain that he intended to kill the King—indeed, he denied it—but at any rate he pointed the weapon at the royal box. The scene which followed was one of tremendous excitement. Hadfield was seized by his neighbours in the pit and hurried through the orchestra into a room at the back of the stage. George came to the front of his box and bowed repeatedly to the wildly cheering audience, who demanded "God save the King" from the musicians. After this the curtain went up; for, in reply to a timid question by the Queen, the King had said, "We will not stir but stay the entertainment out." The play was not yet allowed to proceed, however. Bannister, who was on first, was met by insistent demands as to what had become of the assassin and could not proceed with his lines.

Finally Mrs. Jordan was sent on with him and together they assured the seething audience that the man was in safe custody and so secured a hearing for the play.

The Duke of Clarence was present in the theatre, but, as may be imagined, not with the royal party in a place where he had so often been seen with Mrs. Jordan. He formed, with his brother Cumberland and with Sheridan, one of the escort which took Hadfield to Cold Bath Fields after a preliminary examination in the theatre. It is recorded also that it was he who, on the following morning, discovered in Lady Milner's box the second of the two slugs fired by the madman. That same morning he and his brothers had all breakfasted at Buckingham Palace with the King, Queen, and Princesses, the incident at Drury Lane having one happy result that it reconciled, if only for a moment, George III. and his elder sons. Later in the day the Duke of Clarence went down to the House of Lords and delivered a long and certainly very remarkable speech, full of references to Jewish, Greek, and Roman customs, against Lord Auckland's bill to prevent anyone divorced for adultery marrying the other guilty party. The Duke pleaded earnestly on behalf of the unfortunate women whom the proposed measure would punish far more than the men, and quoted with effect from an old speech by one of the bishops who now supported the bill. For "the lapsed female," His Lordship had said, "the very possibility of repentance is almost cut off, unless it be such repentance as may be exercised by the terrified sinner in her last agonies, perishing in the open streets, under the merciless pelting of the elements, of cold and hunger and a broken heart."

From the House of Lords the Duke returned to Bushey and to a "lapsed female" who, by a curious and cruel irony, was one day to perish, if not in the open streets, at least in a shabby foreign lodging—if not of hunger and cold, at least of a broken heart.

On June 12th and 13th Mrs. Jordan made two more of her appearances for charity at Covent Garden. On the first occasion the benefit was for John O'Keefe, the unfortunate author of *The Son-in-Law*, *The Poor Soldier*, etc.; with Mrs. Jordan's help he now received about £360. The second benefit was for the Bayswater Lying-in Hospital, on behalf of whose funds she revived her old success *The Sultan*.

An announcement in the *Gentleman's Magazine* —"Jan. 18. At the lodge in Bushey Park, Mrs. Jordan, of Drury Lane Theatre, a daughter"— —explains why it was that not until the spring of 1801 was Mrs. Jordan seen again on the stage. The daughter was Elizabeth Fitzclarence, sixth of the children borne by her to the Duke.

On March 12th Mrs. Jordan reappeared in *The Country Girl*. "It is true that she was as delightful as ever in the part," Boaden comments; "but she often complained that if her friends were not tired of the repetition, she was almost ashamed of it." Her friends were given small opportunity of seeing her in anything but repetitions; for *Nina*, at her own benefit, and "Monk" Lewis's preposterous *Adelmorn the Outlaw* were the only two novelties in which she was allowed to show herself. The reason was that John Kemble was once again manager at Drury Lane, and Mrs. Siddons was "there to be doled out incessantly," says Mrs. Jordan's biographer in disgust, in a procession of tragedies, nearly all of them old.

History repeated itself astonishingly with regard to Mrs. Jordan at this period in her life. On June 19th she played at Covent Garden for the benefit of the Bayswater Hospital.* On February 18th, 1802, a child (Adolphus Fitzclarence) was born to her at Bushey Park. And on the following April 5th she made her reappearance at Drury Lane in *The Country Girl.* And once more Boaden complains that nothing was written for Mrs. Jordan. She did, indeed, play characters for the first time in four revivals, and appeared in one play which had never been seen in public—*Fashionable Friends.* "This Comedy," according to an advertisement which accompanied its publication in book-form, "found among the papers of the late Earl of Orford, and remaining unclaimed in the hands of his executors for four years, was brought forward at Mr. Kemble's request. After the extraordinary abuse that has been lavished upon it, the executors considered it as a duty to the unknown author to publish it."

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* She was seen later in the summer at the Richmond Theatre, for Thomas Dibdin records seeing, when walking in Richmond one day, a poster with her name in the largest possible type. (*Reminiscences*, I., 296.)

The extraordinary abuse was probably due to "the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass"—the fashionable friends, both male and female, being a very immoral set of characters not hard to parallel in real life at the time, though the stage personages were more witty. Mrs. Jordan had not so good a part as Miss De Camp, though this mattered little, *Fashionable Friends* only being repeated once.

For her benefit on May 17th, Mrs. Jordan chose *The Tender Husband* and *The Old Maid.** In *The Tender Husband* she was assisted by old King, who was bringing to a close a more than fifty years' connection with Drury Lane, and she returned the compliment by playing Lady Teazle to his Sir Peter at his last benefit a week later. Boaden, who was present, describes how after the play King faltered out the farewell address which Cumberland had written for him and was greeted with thunderous applause. "He professed his profound sensibility by repeated bows, and at the exact moment Mrs. Jordan came on the stage, absolutely *beautiful* from the interest she took, and led the father of the stage from the presence of the public to a seat in the green-room," where he was presented with a silver cup and salver from "his brothers and sisters of the sock and buskin."

In June Mrs. Jordan again gave her services for charity at Covent Garden, playing *The Sultan* twice, on the second occasion for the Bayswater

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* The play-bill gives in the cast for the latter, "Old Maid, Mrs. Jordan, being positively the last time of her performing that character."

Hospital. Not having the same reason for resting as in the two preceding years, she also took summer engagements, at Richmond, and for a week in August at Margate. It was probably this year that the schoolboy Shelley saw her act *The Country Girl* at Richmond; but, though it was his first theatre, he was not much impressed. The fault was not Mrs. Jordan's. Shelley, says Medwin, "had no fondness for theatrical representations; and in London, afterwards, rarely went to the play." For Medwin, on the other hand, the day was "an era in his life."*

Mrs. Jordan had a narrow escape from serious injury, or even death, at Margate, for in the last act of *The Country Girl*, where she had to speak from a window, a lamp behind the scene set fire to her skirt and half-burned it before it could be put out. In spite of the shock, however, she was able to continue playing.

On September 16th she was back for the reopening of Drury Lane and took her part in *The Inconstant*, under the new manager, Bannister junior. John Kemble, disappointed of his hope of buying a share in the theatre, had resigned the managership a second time and now severed his connection with Drury Lane for good, taking one farewell benefit in September. With him went Mrs. Siddons. By their departure the company was sadly weakened, and it rested with Mrs. Jordan and Bannister himself to cope with a difficult situation—which became still more difficult when, a year later, Kemble and his sister went to Covent Garden, of which he had bought a share. It was a sign of the times that Mrs. Jordan was seen during the 1802-3 season in seven new parts, two of them brand-new plays. One of the latter, Allingham's *Marriage Promise*, ran for twenty-one nights and furnished her with a rôle which proved attractive.

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* Thomas Medwin, *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, I. 52. He says that the visit to the Richmond Theatre was on an occasion when Shelley and he played truant from Brentford and rowed to Richmond. As Shelley seems to have left Sion House in 1803, the date of the visit cannot have been later than that year; and we do not know that Mrs. Jordan was at Richmond then, whereas she certainly was there in 1802.

While she was very busy at the theatre this winter, Mrs. Jordan had another matter to occupy her attention, the coming of age in December of her eldest daughter Frances. How long Frances had remained under the guidance of "the liberal and Christian principles of a Lloyd" we do not know. Now her mother took for her a house in Golden Square, and here she resided, having usually the society of her half-sisters Dora and Lucy, until she married. She might have done that now, for she received an offer from an old gentleman named Bettesworth of his hand and a considerable fortune. Unhappily she reserved herself for a scoundrel some years later.

It has been mentioned that Daly had made some attempts, though in vain, to see his offspring. It is not recorded whether Ford ever showed anxiety about the welfare of his. At any rate he made them no allowance either when parting from Mrs. Jordan or later. He was now Sir Richard, a magistrate, and married to a lady with some property. But Boaden asserts positively, no doubt on the authority of Mrs. Jordan herself, that "in any direct way the young ladies never received provision from their father, and, if anything indirectly was given for them to their mother, it was swallowed up in the gulf of her enormous expenses." As he died in 1806, he did not see either of his illegitimate daughters married.

Mrs. Jordan's Covent Garden appearance in 1803 was for the benefit of Lee Lewes, when she played Violante to his Lissardo in *The Wonder*. (The poor man did not live to enjoy his profits from the performance long, for he was found dead in bed less than a month later.) As for Drury Lane, after June 15th the theatre did not see her again until the following January 2nd, when *The Country Girl* once more served to reintroduce her to the public. In the interval another daughter had arrived, Augusta Fitzclarence, born November 20th. But in spite of her late start Mrs. Jordan had a season full of novelties. The chief of these was a play written for her by Cherry the actor, who had come to Drury Lane from Limerick and was eager to be associated with his fellow townswoman in a success. He had his desire, for in the Widow Cheerly of his *Soldier's Daughter* he furnished Mrs. Jordan with one of her best parts. "The lively spirit that presides over the destinies of all," says Boaden in his description of the play, "is the character of the Widow Cheerly, acted by the delightful woman with as much zeal as skill, and as though she felt its importance to herself: and it unquestionably was of the greatest, as being distinguished from either the Romp or the Woman of Fashion, and attractive from vivacity, knowledge, and goodness." *The Soldier's Daughter* was seen on thirty-five occasions and formed the chief piece on the closing night in June. No other novelty had such a success, and a hitherto unacted farce which Mrs. Jordan introduced at her benefit—*The Middle Dish, or the Irishman in Turkey*, by the Dublin playwright Oulton—was such a failure that it was not put on again. Thanks, however, to *The Soldier's Daughter* and the Widow Cheerly, Drury Lane prospered beyond expectation without a Kemble in the company.

Although it looks curious that in the first year of John Kemble's management at Covent Garden, Mrs. Jordan failed to make her annual appearance for the Bayswater Hospital, the coincidence was accidental. She played once at Covent Garden in May, for the benefit of Mrs. Mattocks; but when the Hospital benefit night arrived at the end of June, she was suddenly taken ill, and in *The Devil to Pay* Nell was played by Thomas Dibdin's wife instead of her.

The following winter was made remarkable in theatrical history by the appearance in London of "the young Roscius," Master Betty. Mrs. Jordan was lucky in that Betty, like nearly every boy prodigy on the stage, was a tragedian. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons suffered the mortification of seeing their field in possession of a child, elevated by a popular craze to the position of a demi-god.

Not so Mrs. Jordan. Her receipts must have suffered seriously when the thirteen-year-old Betty, in his engagements at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, was filling houses to suffocation and pocketing his hundred pounds a night. But at least her preeminence in her particular branch of the dramatic art suffered no eclipse. Otherwise we probably should not have found the Duke of Clarence coming forward in public as patron of the boy and graciously accepting the dedication to himself of the engraving of Northcote's portrait of "the Young Roscius drawing inspiration from Shakespeare's tomb."

Perhaps it is to His Royal Highness that Cumberland alludes in his memoirs when he relates how he "saw this exquisite young gentleman wafted to his morning's rehearsal in a vehicle that to my vulgar optics seemed to wear upon its polished doors a ducal crown." Cumberland called on John Kemble and found him "sick at home." This was not wonderful, when we hear of a print in the shop-windows representing Betty and Kemble on one horse, Betty riding before and saying, "I don't mean to affront you; but when two persons ride on a horse, one must ride behind."

The Betty craze lasted two seasons and brought little satisfaction to theatrical managers or adult performers. It probably had nothing to do with Mrs. Jordan's retirement from the stage in 1806, for which there are other reasons that appear sufficient. On March 1st, 1805, she gave birth to Augustus, her fifth and last son, and the ninth in the list of the Fitzclarence children. This event caused a considerable break in the mother's appearances at Drury Lane, though she was seen again in *The Country Girl* at Bannister's benefit at the end of April and continued until the end of the season, when she also gave her services for Macklin's widow at Covent Garden. In the following winter she was still in the Drury Lane Company. On May 21st, 1806, she took her own benefit and a week later played at Bannister's. After this her characters were in other hands, those of Miss Mellon, afterwards Duchess of St. Albans, and Miss Duncan, a rising star whom her admirers called a second Miss Farren.

That Mrs. Jordan had so long refused to retire into private life in spite of the growth of her family is no doubt to be explained—apart from her sincere love of the stage—by her desire to provide for those daughters who were not the children of her protector. The mother was determined that they should not suffer from the handicap, in addition to their illegitimacy, of being penniless girls. Therefore she had insisted on playing year after year, amid all the inconveniences caused by her domestic circumstances, until she felt that she could find three dowries sufficient to attract eligible sons-in-law. We shall see that she afterwards came to the conclusion that still more was wanted for this purpose and went back to Drury Lane for a while. An explanation as to why she withdrew in 1806, however, may be found in the affairs of the Duke of Clarence. If we may believe his friends, he was anxious for Mrs. Jordan to leave the stage and devote herself only to the care of her children. But he could not, out of his resources, give her enough to enable her to dispense with her theatrical salary and do what she considered her duty by the daughters of Daly and Ford. Now he suddenly became more prosperous. Early in 1806, Parliament voted an increase of the incomes of him and his younger brothers from £12,000 to £18,000 a year. Nor was that all. From a return made at the request of a member of the House of Commons two years later it appeared that in April, 1806, the Duke of Clarence had received from the Crown a grant of £20,000. We can scarcely believe that Mrs. Jordan reaped no benefit from this good fortune, or that the Duke failed this year at least to pay his mistress the allowance which should have been hers every year.

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. JORDAN RETIRES

THAT the sixteen months of Mrs. Jordan's first prolonged absence from the stage were a period of peaceful repose may be imagined from the almost complete silence with which her doings were surrounded. If Ovid's *bene qui latuit bene vixit* is true, then the actress lived a very good life now at Bushey Park. One brief flash of notoriety in the newspapers was not due to any fault of hers, but to the indiscretion of her protector. The Duke, debarred by his father from an active share in public affairs, had devoted himself for some time past to laying out the grounds at Bushey. Nelson's death brought him for a moment from his obscurity to attend the funeral and to deliver a panegyric on his friend in the House of Lords; but for the most part he avoided anything likely to make him conspicuous. The scandal of the relations between the Prince and Princess of Wales made prudence very desirable in the Prince's brothers. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that when his forty-first birthday arrived, on August 21st, 1806, Clarence cast discretion to the winds and gave his enemies—and "d——d good-natured friends"—on the Press a chance of making him ridiculous.

The ostensibly friendly accounts of the birthday festivities are certainly extraordinary in the frankness with which they record the presence of Mrs. Jordan. One example will suffice, taken from the *Courier* of August 23rd:

"The Duke of Clarence's birthday was celebrated with much splendour in Bushey Park on Thursday. The grand hall was entirely new fitted up with bronze pilasters and various marble imitations; the ceiling was correctly clouded, and the whole illuminated with some brilliant patent lamps, suspended from a beautiful eagle. The dining-room, in the right wing, was fitted up in a modern style, with new elegant lamps at the different entrances. The pleasure-ground was disposed for the occasion, and the servants had new liveries. In the morning the Dukes of York's and Kent's Bands arrived in caravans; after dressing themselves and dining, they went into the pleasure-grounds and played alternately some charming pieces. The Duke of Kent's played some of the choruses and movements from Haydn's Oratorio of *The Creation*, arranged by command of His Royal Highness for a band of wind instruments. About five o'clock the Prince of Wales, the Dukes of York, Kent, Sussex, and Cambridge, Colonel Paget, &c. arrived from reviewing the German Legion. After they had dressed for dinner they walked in the pleasure-grounds, accompanied by the Lord

From a mezzotint engraving by G. Dupont after a painting by T. Gainsborough.

PRINCE WILLIAM HENRY,

When Duke of Clarence.

[*Facing p.* 230.

Chancellor, Earl and Countess of Athlone and Daughter, Lord Leicester, Baron Hotham and Lady, Baron Eden, the Attorney General, Colonels Paget and McMillan, Serjeant Marshall, and a number of other persons. At seven o'clock the second bell announced the dinner, when the Prince took Mrs. Jordan by the hand, led her into the dining-room, and seated her at the top of the table. The Prince took his seat at her right hand, and the Duke of York at her left; the Duke of Cambridge sat next to the Prince, the Duke of Kent next to the Duke of York, and the Lord Chancellor next to His Royal Highness. The Duke of Clarence sat at the foot of the table.

"It is hardly necessary to state that the table was sumptuously covered with everything the season could afford. The bands played on the lawn, close to the dining-room window. The populace were permitted to enter the pleasure-grounds to behold the royal banquet, while the presence of Messrs. Townsend, Sayers, and Macmanus preserved the most correct decorum.

"The Duke's numerous family were introduced, and admired by the Prince, the Royal Dukes, and the whole company; an infant in arms, with a most beautiful white head of hair,* was brought into the dining-room by the nursery maid. After dinner the Prince gave 'The Duke of Clarence,' which was drunk with three times three. The Duke then gave 'The King,' which was drunk in a solemn manner. A discharge of cannon from

* Augustus Fitzclarence.

the lawn followed 'The Queen and Princess'—'The Duke of York and the Army.' His Royal Highness's band then struck up his celebrated march."

The *Courier's* account was reproduced in the *Political Register* on September 6th, when Cobbett, the editor, took the opportunity of delivering a scathing attack on the royal brothers and everyone else concerned in the entertainment of August 21st—including the Whig ministry which had, at the close of the last parliamentary session, made large grants of public money to "support the dignity of the several branches of the royal family." Affecting to treat the Press accounts of the birthday celebration as libellous and untrue, Cobbett called for a contradiction of them by the Prince of Wales or one of his brothers. "The representing of the oratorio of *The Creation*, and arranged by the Duke of Kent, too," he writes, "applied to the purpose of ushering in the *numerous family* of the Duke of Clarence—the thus representing the Duke of Kent as employed in an act whereby the procreation of a brood of illegitimate children is put in comparison with the great works of the Almighty is an act of the most indiscreet disloyalty and of blasphemy the most daring. We all know that the Duke of Clarence is not married and that therefore, if he had children, those children must be bastards, and that the father must be guilty of a crime in the eye of the law as well as of religion . . . Can we hesitate in declaring that to represent the Duke of Clarence as having a 'numerous family of children' is foully to slander His Royal Highness, and that further to represent him as ostentatiously exhibiting this 'numerous family' in public, and in the immediate presence of all his royal brothers, and of the Lord Chancellor of England and others of the nobles, is to accuse him of a gratuitous and wanton insult against the laws, manners, and morals of the country."

As to the falsity of the story, Cobbett continues: "I am confirmed in my opinion when I hear the same writer assert that the Prince of Wales took *Mother Jordan by the hand*, and in the presence of *a Countess, a Countess's Daughter, and a Baroness, seated her at the head of the table*, taking his place upon her right hand, his royal brothers arranging themselves according to their rank on both sides of the table, the *post of honour* being nearest Mother Jordan, who, the last time I saw her, cost me eighteenpence in her character of Nell Jobson." He therefore made, to "the royal parties whose names had been so unwarrantably brought before the public," a tender of his pages and his pen for the purpose of promulgating that contradiction of the story which every truly loyal subject was so desirous to see.

Needless to say, no notice was taken of Cobbett's offer. Soon afterwards the Duke of Clarence set out with the Prince of Wales on a visit to the North of England. Proceedings against the Princess were already in progress, but they did not interfere with the warmth of the Prince's reception at Liverpool, where he was presented with the freedom of the city. The Duke had been thus honoured already out of gratitude for his opposition in the Lords to the abolition of the slave-trade; and his portrait by Sir Martin Shee, painted at the request of the Corporation, hung in the hall where his brother now received the token of Liverpool's respect.

While the Duke went north, Mrs. Jordan remained at Bushey, in anticipation of the arrival of another child. On the following March 20th, a daughter was born, whom we may identify with Amelia Fitzclarence, the youngest of all her offspring.* After this addition to her already large family by the Duke we might have expected Mrs. Jordan's retirement from the stage to have become definite. But such was not the case. Six months later she was back at Drury Lane, opening the season once more with *The Country Girl*, and she played through into the summer of 1808. For the most part she relied upon her old successes. Her new parts were few, the most important being Lady Bloomfield in Kenney's comedy of *The World*. She did her best to uphold the failing fortunes of Drury Lane, and her popularity showed no sign of decrease yet.

We have said that her return to the theatre was caused by the same reason which had made her continue there so long after she had accepted the protection of the Duke of Clarence, the desire to give her three eldest daughters a good start in life. The date of her reappearance is significant. She rejoined her old company for the season of 1807-8; and at the same time in 1808 Frances Jordan, now in her twenty-sixth year, married a Mr. Thomas Alsop, clerk of the delivery of small arms in the Ordnance Office at the Tower. "There is a respectability attached to the clerkships in government offices," remarks Boaden sarcastically, "which belongs to no other subordinates in life. The gentlemen who fill them rank as esquires in the Red Book; and, why I know not, are supposed in their style of living, to be little bounded by the mere salaries of their respective positions." He mentions that Alsop's residence was 11, Park Place, and that Dora and Lucy went to live for a time with their married sister.

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* This birth of a daughter is recorded in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1807. In the list of the Fitzclarences in the same magazine for August, 1837, Amelia's birthday is given as November 5th, 1803, which might be supposed to be a misprint for 1808. But Mrs. Jordan was playing Peggy at Drury Lane on November 3rd and the Widow Cheerly on November 7th in that year.

Dora was not long in following the example of Frances. In March, 1809, she became the wife of another clerk in the Ordnance Office, Frederick Edward March, a natural son of Lord Henry Fitzgerald.* (Lord Henry was a man much interested in the stage and an amateur actor himself; it is curious that his illegitimate son should marry an actress's illegitimate daughter.) From what Boaden says it appears that Mrs. Jordan made the same settlement on Frances and Dora as she subsequently made upon Lucy—namely, the equivalent of ten thousand pounds. He adds: "I believe the sons-in-law alike received two thousand pounds of these ten, and an annual present, something like two hundred pounds, from Mrs. Jordan while she had the means to give it." How much the two gentlemen from the Ordnance Office appreciated the generosity of their mother-in-law will become apparent in due time.

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* See *Gentleman's Magazine*, March and April, 1809. The second announcement is a correction of the first.

To meet the heavy calls made upon her purse in the establishment of Frances and Dora, Mrs. Jordan renewed her engagement at Drury Lane for the winter of 1808-9. Drury Lane reopened its doors on September 17th, and on the 24th she was seen in *The Country Girl.* The management did not succeed in finding anything new for her until January 5th, when S. J. Arnold's comedy *Man and Wife* was put on. This seems to have been specially written that she might play Helen Worrett in it. The *Courier's* dramatic critic says that the author had "a delightful part for the universal favourite Mrs. Jordan"*; while the *Star* is of opinion that "Mrs. Jordan's inimitable acting constitutes a great part of the merit of the representation," and only questions the wisdom of the playwright who has a particular performer in his eye, because thereby he ensures a short life for his play.

Amid the satisfaction which she must have felt over the tributes of the Press to her popularity and powers there was, however, a mingling of bitterness. She was at this period subjected again to attacks by what Boaden calls "the infamous prints of the time"—attacks, he says, "probably levelled at her purse, and conceiving the union of her daughters with two gentlemen in public life a happy opportunity to work upon her fears or their delicacy." They professed to report a violent quarrel between Mrs. Jordan and the Duke of Clarence, perhaps in connection with the settlements upon Frances and Dora. Boaden prints a letter which Mrs. Jordan, in her distress, sent to someone whom he calls simply "a confidential friend" and who put a number of the actress's letters at his disposal when he was writing her life.

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* Genest, speaking of her performance of the same character at Bath two years later, says that Mrs. Jordan "played Helen as well as so bad a part would permit." (VIII., 259.)

"With regard to the report of my quarrel with the Duke," Mrs. Jordan says, "every day of our past and present lives must give the lie to it. He is an example for half the husbands and fathers in the world, the best of masters, and the most firm and generous of friends. I will in a day or two avail myself of your kind offer to contradict those odious and truly wicked reports. I am so ill that I can do nothing myself, but must wait for the assistance of a good and clever friend, who is at present out of the way and who (if truth is not quite scared out of the world) will endeavour to do away the ill impressions those reports were meant to make."

The "good and clever friend" was possibly Boaden himself. A second communication to the same person, dated "Bushy House, March 27th, 1809," states that this friend advised that what had been done had every good effect that could be wished for, and that a renewal of the subject might do more harm than good.

How bitterly she felt the attacks upon her daughters is shown by yet another letter to the same person, undated but about the same period, in which she assures him that his candour could not be better employed than in the defence of "three as good and virtuous girls as ever existed." "It would be painful to me, and unnecessary to you," she continues, "to mention the cruel and infamous reports for some time in circulation, and to the extent of which I was really a stranger until last week. To say it has made me 'sick at heart' is saying little."

No doubt, were it worth while, a study of the before-mentioned "infamous prints" would reveal what it was that especially pained Mrs. Jordan. But of one thing we may be sure, that the real target aimed at was not the actress herself, but her protector. The scandalous revelations concerning the Duke of York and Mary Anne Clarke emboldened the most scurrilous opponents of the royal family to more than usual activity, and the Bushey Park establishment was a ready mark for their shafts. The injustice of involving Mrs. Jordan's daughters by other fathers than the Duke of Clarence was obvious, but that was a matter which concerned the libellers little.

The success of *Man and Wife* relieved the Drury Lane management of the necessity of looking for a new comedy for some time. And then an event occurred which upset all plans which may have been entertained. On February 24th, Drury Lane Theatre was burnt down, only five months after the similar fate of its great rival in Covent Garden. Both fires are supposed to have been accidental, though the double event was a strange coincidence. The blow to Sheridan and the other proprietors of Drury Lane was tremendous, for £129,000 had been sunk in the building and it was only insured for £35,000. Among the company Mrs. Jordan was said to be the chief sufferer. Boaden thinks that her jewelry was safe at the silversmith's— "the usual depository of the diamonds of our shining stars"— but, owing to her home being at Bushey, she probably kept more of her wardrobe at the theatre than the other actresses.* The disaster determined her to retire again from the London stage. Her object in coming back had been to add to her income for the benefit of her girls, and the prospect of doing this was now small. The Drury Lane Company received what the management could afford to pay them. Some performances took place at the Opera House in the Haymarket, which had also sheltered the homeless Covent Garden Company a little earlier, and then the Lyceum was secured for the remainder of the season. Mrs. Jordan played at the Opera House, notably in *The*

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* It seems, however, that some of her property was saved. In the *Courier's* account of the fire it is stated that, "at the suggestion of a gentleman present, Mrs. Jordan's dressing-room was broken open, and her bureau, the looking-glasses, &c., were conveyed away."

Country Girl on a benefit night for the out-of-work stage-hands; but she did not go to the Lyceum. She herself gives a reason, which we need not regard as the sole one, for her conduct, when in the already quoted letter of March 27th, 1809, she says: "In obedience to the Duke's wishes, I have withdrawn myself for the present—or at least till there is a Theatre Royal for me to appear in." In a postscript she adds "I am to play to-morrow week at the Opera House; and, as it is likely to be my *last night*, it would not be amiss to have it 'insinuated into the boxes.'"

Although she thus spoke of her *last night*, she was only referring to appearances in London; for this summer she had arranged to go "cruising" on a more extended scale than any year since her connection with the Duke of Clarence. No doubt he had given his permission for the trip to Dublin before she wrote of her withdrawal in obedience to his wishes, while her engagements at Bath and Bristol must have been accepted, after the Drury Lane fire, in lieu of following the company to the Lyceum.

Concerning the visit to Bath we have some interesting details from Mrs. Jordan's own pen, in a letter written on April 22nd to some intimate friend, probably the same to whom she addressed the other communications which we have seen in this chapter. The second paragraph of the letter is very valuable for the insight which it gives into her view of life at this period. The subsequent story of the affair in the library is an admirable illustration of the generosity of her instincts; she was fully justified in her pride over her conduct in trying circumstances.

"DEAR SIR," she writes,

"I should be more insensible than my heart tells me I am, if I did not experience much gratification from your very kind and friendly letters:—*friendly* they must be, for, though I am ever asking favours of you, I feel it impossible that I can ever return them.

"My professional success through life has, indeed, been *most extraordinary;* and, consequently, attended with *great emoluments.* But from my first starting in life, at the early age of fourteen, I have always had a large family to support. My mother was a duty. But on *brothers* and *sisters*[*] I have lavished more money than can be supposed; and more, I am sorry to say, than I can well justify to those who have a stronger and prior claim on my exertions. With regard to myself (as much depends on our ideas of riches) I have certainly enough; but this is too selfish a consideration to weigh one moment against what I consider to be a duty. I am quite tired of the profession. I have lost those great excitements, *vanity* and *emulation.* The first has been amply gratified; and the last I see no occasion for; but still, without these, it is a mere money-getting drudgery.

"The enthusiasm of the good people here is really ridiculous; but it brings 'grist to the mill,' and I shall, notwithstanding the great drawback of unsettled weather, clear between this place and Bristol from £800 to £900.

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[*] This passage may be taken to imply the existence of other brothers and sisters than those of whom we actually hear; but, on the other hand, it is possibly rhetorical.

"Though I very seldom go out when from home, I was tempted by my dear girl to go to a fashionable library to read the papers; and, not being known, was entertained by some ladies with a most *pathetic* description of the parting between me and the Duke! My very dress was described, and the *whole conversation accurately repeated!* Unfortunately for the party, a lady came in, who immediately addressed me by *name*, which threw them into the most ridiculous and (I conceive) the most unpleasant embarrassment imaginable. In pity to them I left the place *immediately*, and flatter myself I did not show any disgust or ill-nature on the occasion." . . .

We might suppose that the "dear girl" of whom she speaks was Lucy, the one still unmarried of her elder three, were it not that we hear later of Mrs. Alsop being her companion on tour in the North. It is possible that Lucy was with her now, Frances afterwards. The point is only of importance in its bearing on the relations of Mrs. Alsop with her husband.

Mrs. Jordan opened her season at Bath with *The Country Girl* on April 11th, and after three weeks, during which she showed herself in all her most popular parts, including Lady Teazle, Violante, the Widow Cheerly, Roxalana, etc., took her benefit on May 2nd, as the Widow Belmour in *The Way to Keep Him* and Nell in *The Devil to Pay*. Her experience of Bath is summed up by the *Morning Herald* in the words, "crowded houses and a flattering increase of professional fame." Of her engagement at Bristol we hear no details. From Bristol she returned to Bushey Park, and then set out for Dublin in June.

Here we have the advantage of some information once more from the *Personal Sketches* of Sir Jonah Barrington, whose early impressions of her we have seen. In the interval Sir Jonah had made the acquaintance of the Duke of Clarence and had met the former Miss Francis in the family circle at Bushey. He had conceived a great admiration for His Royal Highness, who "became the efficient friend of me and of my family—not with that high and frigid mien which so often renders ungracious the favours of authorities in the British government, but with the frankness and sincerity of a prince." The Duke, we know, was generally affable and unaffected. He had also shown great kindness to Barrington's only son Edward, whom he had educated with his own (George Fitzclarence) at Marlow. Barrington's prejudice in favour of his patron can be readily understood, therefore. It blinds him to the faults in the Duke's later conduct towards Mrs. Jordan. At the same time he still retained his early admiration of the actress, of whom he says, when reintroducing her in his memoirs, that "never did he find, in any character, a more complete concentration of every quality that should distinguish a mother, a friend, and a gentlewoman." Barrington deals abundantly in superlatives.

The Dublin visit, he says, afforded him a better opportunity of "eliciting any trait of Mrs. Jordan's nature or disposition." He continues: "She was greeted with all the acclamations that her reputation and talent so fully merited. She was well received also amongst some of the best society in Dublin, whose curiosity was excited beyond measure to converse with her in private. Here, however, she disappointed all; for there was about her no display, and the animated, lively, brilliant mimic on the boards was in the saloon retiring, quiet, nay, almost reserved. Mrs. Jordan, in fact, seldom spoke much in company, but then she spoke well: she made no exertion to appear distinguished and became more so by the absence of effort. The performer was wholly merged in the gentlewoman, and thus, although on her entrance this celebrated person failed to *impress* the company, she *never* failed to retire in possession of their respect."

The visit was, from a theatrical point of view, a failure. At the start of the engagement she wrote to the "confidential friend" that, though the audience was very kind and the reception most brilliant, "*entre nous*, I do not think I shall make as much money as I expected." Her fear was more than realised. She had made an arrangement with the Dublin management to receive half-profits, but though the houses were crowded the receipts were poor. A bad company had been engaged to support her. "As if the spirit of Daly had survived in the theatre disgraced by his conduct," says Boaden, "it was there alone that respect failed towards a lady who was one of its rarest ornaments." Barrington confirms this. Only Mrs. Jordan's presence, according to him, saved the company from being scouted. "One was forgetful, another drunk: I confess I never myself saw such a crew. . . . She found it absolutely necessary to refuse acting with one or two vulgar, drunken fellows belonging to the set they had selected to sustain her; and she quitted the country at length, having formed a fixed determination never to repeat any engagement with the persons who then *managed* the theatricals in Dublin."

Among other ways in which the company made Mrs. Jordan's association with them unpleasant was by base insinuations. She found in Dublin an old actor called Barrett, who had played on the night of her original *début* and who was now in distress. She charitably gave him money, and was at once assailed with suggestions that there was more in this than met the eye. Nor did the mortification of her Dublin visit cease with her departure. The managers fell out among themselves after she had left, and actions for defamation of character followed. A man of the name of Corri was particularly free with his libels, in which he involved not only Mrs. Jordan, but also Barrington and his family. Sir Jonah prosecuted him, and says that at the trial one of Corri's counsel, Thomas (afterwards Serjeant) Gold, "thought proper to indulge himself in language and statements respecting Mrs. Jordan neither founded in fact nor delicate in a gentleman." Sir Jonah silenced him and won his action, Corri being sentenced to a term of imprisonment; but Mrs. Jordan was extremely hurt by Gold's wanton conduct, for "his speech, as it appeared in the newspapers, was too gross even for the vulgarest declaimer." She wrote to Barrington after her return to Bushey Park, asking whether she ought not to bring an action. "Why indeed should *I* expect to escape their infamous calumnies?" she asks. "Truth, however, will force its way, and justice exterminate that nest of vipers."

Barrington gave her the advice which he had heard given once by Sir John Doyle: "If you wrestle with a chimney-sweeper, it is true you may throw your antagonist, but your own coat will certainly be dirtied in the encounter." Mrs. Jordan took the advice and abandoned the idea of legal proceedings.

Mrs. Jordan did not at once retire to Bushey Park from Dublin, but engaged in what she calls, in a letter to Barrington, "a very fatiguing though very prosperous cruise of five weeks." One of the places visited was Liverpool. Here Barrington himself saw her again. At least his reference to the meeting appears to belong to this period, for he says that she had come over from Dublin to act at Liverpool. "She was not then in high spirits," he narrates. (Had she much reason for high spirits?) "Her tone in this respect was not uniform. In the mornings she usually seemed depressed; at noon she went to rehearsal—came home fatigued, dined at three, and then reclined in her chamber till it was time to dress for the performance. She generally went to the theatre low-spirited. I once accompanied Mrs. Jordan to the green-room at Liverpool: Mrs. Alsop and her old maid assiduously attended her. She went thither languid and apparently reluctant. But in a quarter of an hour her very nature seemed to undergo a metamorphosis. The sudden change of her manner appeared to me, in fact, nearly miraculous; she walked spiritedly across the stage two or three times, as if to measure its extent; and the moment her foot touched the scenic boards her spirit seemed to be regenerated; she cheered up, hummed an air, stepped light and quick and every symptom of depression vanished! The comic eye and cordial laugh returned upon their enchanting mistress and announced that she felt herself moving in her proper element. Her attachment to the practice of her profession, in fact, exceeded anything I could conceive."

On August 7th* Mrs. Jordan was back at Bushey Park, now apparently (though she, no doubt, had mental reservations) having said her farewell to theatrical life. The domestic touch is strong in what she writes to Barrington: "I never saw the Duke enjoy anything more than the poultry you sent us; they were delicious. He desires me to offer his best regards to yourself and your ladies."

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* Her letter to Barrington (II., 236), which announces her return on "the 7th inst.," is, like the majority of her letters, undated; but we know from another letter that she was at Bushey in the middle of August, and the fact that she had made a "cruise of five weeks" after leaving Dublin makes it impossible that she could have been back on July 7th.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FAMILY CIRCLE

SINCE we have now brought Mrs. Jordan's story down to the point when she withdrew herself entirely, for a period of eighteen months, from the public gaze and devoted herself to her private affairs, it is time to pause for the purpose of passing under review the large family of children of which she was the mother.

We have seen the marriages of Frances Jordan to Alsop and of Dora Jordan (or Ford) to March, and the generous way in which Mrs. Jordan provided for the two girls and their husbands. That Alsop had already begun to presume upon her kindness before her second retirement from the stage is not certain, but seems probable from the utter ruin of his affairs later and from the fact that Mrs. Alsop went as her mother's companion on tour in the summer of 1809. The marriage was beyond doubt an unhappy one, not only because of the husband's extravagance, but also because of the wife's flightiness, which ultimately developed into something worse. It is from Mrs. Jordan herself that we shall learn that her eldest daughter

From an engraving by J. Heath after a picture by J. Russell.

MRS. JORDAN.

[*Facing p.* 248.

was partly to blame, even before her conduct became a public scandal. The child of Richard Daly had too much of her father in her to run straight in circumstances which were calculated to be a severe test to any woman. Only a better knowledge of Alsop's misdoings, however, would enable us to say how greatly she was tried. Up to the point which we have reached there is no indication that she had forfeited her mother's sympathy.

Dora's marriage promised better, and it is evident that Mrs. Jordan had a genuine affection for Frederick March and trusted him completely. For Lucy, still single at the time of her second retirement, the mother was soon successful in making a good match. Her announcement of this in a letter to himself is preserved by Sir Jonah Barrington. "I am sure," she wrote, "you will be pleased to hear that your young friend Lucy is about to be married, much to my satisfaction, to Colonel Hawker, of the 14th Dragoons: he is a most excellent man and has a very good private property. She will make the best of wives—a better girl never lived: it makes me quite happy, and I intend to give her the value of £10,000."

The wedding took place on April 30th, 1810,* and Hawker seems to have fully justified the expectations of his mother-in-law. He turned out a good husband and advanced in his profession, whether by influence or by merit, soon obtaining the rank of general.

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* *Gentleman's Magazine*, May, 1810. The bride is there described as "Miss Jordan, of The Priory, Sydenham," which must have been a house taken by the actress for her daughter.

We now come to the ten children of Mrs. Jordan and the Duke of Clarence, to all of whom we have had allusions from time to time. The eldest son George, Boaden's "infant Hercules," when he reached school age, was sent to a private institution at Sunbury, whence he proceeded to the Royal Military College at Marlow. Having barely attained his thirteenth birthday, he became in February, 1807, a cornet in the 10th Hussars, and the first opportunity was taken of letting him see active service. This was offered by the Peninsular War, the boy obtaining a post as *aide-de-camp* to General Slade in 1808* and being present at the battle of Corunna. He returned home, but in the following April went out again on the staff ot Sir Charles Stewart, under whom he fought at Talavera, and with whom he came back to England. To the period of his second home-coming may be referred a letter from the Duke of Clarence to his youngest sister Amelia (who took much interest in his children, it appears, though she can have met them very seldom, if ever), wherein he tells her of George's arrival at Bushey from Spain.† "He has returned, I may say with truth, after having established a perfect character with all ranks in our army"; and in the event of General Stewart going out again he would rather have George than any other for his *aide-de-camp*.

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* The *Morning Chronicle* of November 5th, 1808, records a visit of the Duke of Clarence to Portsmouth, where he took a most affectionate farewell of his son—apparently George. He told a dinner-party of officers that he had devoted his son to the service of his country, for which he himself had volunteered in vain.

† The letter has no date. It is preserved among the papers of the Princess Amelia's hero, General Fitzroy. (Mr. W. S. Childe Pemberton, *The Romance of the Princess Amelia*, pp. 166-7.)

Nor was the mother less proud than the father. She writes from Dublin on June 18th, to him whom Boaden calls her confidential friend: "That you would enter into my feelings respecting my dear boy I was convinced when I sent you the extract; and, as you very rightly supposed, only meant it for your own perusal; for, however gratifying it might be to my *feeling* to see any testimonial of his good conduct before the *world*, I have reason to believe that HE would be very angry with me if he thought I had made it *public*. I only mention this to show you that he is an unassuming, modest boy; so much so that we could never get him to speak of the business at Corunna, where he was *himself concerned;* but accounts of him from every other source were, indeed, most *gratifying*."

She wrote again to the same friend from Bushey on August 17th, after having received the news of Talavera, where George Fitzclarence seems indeed to have been in considerable danger:

"You may easily guess what [my feelings] were last Monday night when I heard the account of the battle of Talavera. Five thousand killed! The Duke at Brighton! I went to bed, but not to sleep. The Duke set out at five o'clock on the Tuesday, to be the first to relieve me from my misery. I am *mentally* relieved; but it has torn my nerves to pieces. I have *five* boys, and must look forward to a life of constant anxiety and suspense. I am at present very ill."

She was destined to suffer further terrors. George went back to Spain once more, and at the battle of Fuentes d'Onoro in May, 1811, was actually wounded and taken prisoner by the French. He managed to escape, however, and received a reward for his services in promotion to a troop in his regiment.

Concerning Henry Fitzclarence, the doubt which involves the date of his birth extends to his early life. That he followed George's example and became a soldier we know; but there appears to have been an intention at first of making him a sailor. In a letter to Admiral Collingwood, dated May 21st, 1808, the Duke of Clarence says: "I must be allowed to be a sincere friend and well-wisher to the Navy; for though I have lost one son on board the *Blenheim*, I have started another with my old friend and shipmate Keates; and I have another breeding up for the quarter-deck. . . . I took my second son to Deal, which gave me an opportunity of visiting the different ships there."

The son of whom the Duke speaks as having lost was not by Mrs. Jordan.* He is recorded to have served under Admiral Trowbridge on the Indian station from 1803 to 1807, and to have perished with the *Blenheim* in a gale off the Madagascar coast in the last-named year. The boy "breeding up for the quarter-deck" is probably Adolphus, at this time only six. He entered the Navy six years later and rose to be an admiral. But who is the son who has been started with the Duke's old friend and shipmate Keates, and is he the same as the "second son" whom the Duke took with him to Deal? Watkins in his life of William IV. says that one son served on H.M.S. *Superb*, bearing the flag of Admiral Keates, but does not give his name.* When we first hear of Henry definitely, in 1814, he is, like George, in the 10th Hussars.

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* Watkins (*Life and Times of William IV.*, 429) says, "Whether he was also by Mrs. Jordan is not ascertained." To suppose him so involves antedating the Clarence-Jordan connection beyond the limit that our evidence allows. Moreover, had Mrs. Jordan had a son who died in his country's service during her lifetime, surely one of her numerous letters would have mentioned the fact.

The earliest mention, of any importance, of Frederick Fitzclarence is an interesting one. It occurs in a letter written by Lady Albinia Cumberland at Windsor to her daughter, Mrs. Alexander Gordon, in the summer of 1811, and therefore about the time when the Duke of Clarence made up his mind to cast off Mrs. Jordan.† Lady Albinia announces the arrival at Windsor of the Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Prince Regent, and continues:

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* Watkins is inaccurate about the Fitzclarences, as in many other matters. When he writes of "Colonel Frederick Fitzclarence" on pp. 404-5 he is really referring to George. The latter's full name, it is true, was George Augustus Frederick, but he was always known as George. The real Frederick, being born in the last month of 1799, was not of an age to see much active service in the Peninsular War!

† The letter is given in *The Romance of the Princess Amelia*, Appendix I.

"She is grown and improved in looks, but I do not think her manner dignified, as a Princess's ought to be, or indeed as I should wish a daughter of mine to behave. She hates her 'Granny' as she calls her [Queen Charlotte]—loves nobody here except Princess Mary and Sophia, goes swaggering about, and she twangs hands with all the men, is in awe of no one, and glories in her independent way of thinking. . . . Frederick Fitzclarence is here on a visit to Mrs. [?]. She is very fond of him and makes him ride with her every day, to the great annoyance of her Aunts, as if the *Granny* knew it she would be much displeased, and I believe that is her chief reason for wishing it."

The Princess Charlotte of Wales was a self-willed young woman; but, with regard to her liking for little Frederick Fitzclarence, her father no doubt looked on it benignly, out of affection for his brother. Amid the society with which he permitted her to mix * this little boy of eleven was assuredly harmless, whatever "Granny" might think of the acquaintance. His subsequent career, if not notable, was at least respectable, and he rose to the rank of Lieutenant-General. The most prominent act in his life was the arrest of the Cato Street conspirators in 1820, when as captain he headed the detachment of Coldstream Guards and ran considerable risk of death in securing the prisoners.

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* The Prince Regent's upbringing of his daughter was a favourite topic with the journalists of the period. Here is an example of the style of criticism, from the account in *Drakard's Paper* of some fête at which she was present in the spring of 1813:—"Her royal mother was absent, but the Marchioness of Hertford was present—and many other beauties, all 'swelling on the sight,' as the poet expresses it. . . . While she views her Royal Father leaning on the arm of the venerable, because exemplary, Headfort, and glancing his delighted eyes on the expanded beauties that throng around him, and mingle with her Royal grandmother and her maiden aunts—how sensibly must she feel, that to be great it is necessary first to be good—that virtue is the only passport to Royal favour—and that to discountenance vice is one of the first duties that Royalty owes to the people in return for its privileges."

Of Adolphus Fitzclarence we have spoken above. Augustus, the white-headed infant of the Bushey Park entertainment in 1806, was a very eccentric character, on the showing of his own niece Wilhelmina, Countess of Munster, and of Fanny Kemble who met him at a dance, when they were both young.* He told the latter lady that he had originally been trained as a sailor and had been since forced to go into the Church against his will. She found him most unclerical and very disrespectful in his talk about his father, but "he had a charming voice that came to him from his mother." From his niece's description of him he had one qualification of a bishop—beautifully formed legs—and used to wear leggings. But he died a rector, nevertheless.

None of the daughters is heard of in her childhood, but all grew up to make marriages which would have delighted their match-making mother's heart. Sophia is said to have been her father's favourite, and to have acted occasionally as his amanuensis. She died only a few months before him, she and Henry alone failing to survive their father, while all were alive when their mother died.

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* The Countess of Munster, *My Memories* (1904); Fanny Kemble, "An Old Woman's Gossip" in *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1876.

We have had ample proof of the extreme affection which Mrs. Jordan felt for her three eldest daughters. It is evident, from various allusions in letters, that she strove hard—and with some success—to make their juniors look upon them as sisters. But we have no reason for supposing that she had any more love for them than for her Fitzclarence family. Her boys were as much to her as to the fondest mother of male children. We have seen what she wrote after Talavera. An even more pathetic instance of her feelings is shown by her anxiety to defend herself against the malignant attacks made on her in Dublin. Her chief motive for wishing to go to law is said to have been that her sons might not afterwards think there had been any ground for the accusations against her. Of her personal generosity towards them there can be no doubt. There is, indeed, no direct proof that gifts to some of them contributed to her ultimate bankruptcy, but her friends believed so at the time, and the belief is reasonable. They were young army men, and their father, for all the reputation for economy with which his adherents endowed him, could never live on his income while Duke of Clarence. Mrs. Jordan was not one to see a son of hers go short of pocket-money while she had a penny.

There is little in Mrs. Jordan's correspondence which gives us much information about her intimate life with her children. One interesting letter, however, written to Sir Jonah Barrington towards the end of 1809, affords just a glimpse.

Having told him that his son has passed with great credit at the Military College, Marlow, she continues:

"My two beloved boys [? George and Henry] are now at home: they have both gone to South Hill to see your Edward. We shall have a full and merry house at Christmas. 'Tis what the dear Duke delights in: a happier set, when altogether, I believe never yet existed. The ill-natured parts of the world never can enjoy the tranquil pleasures of domestic happiness."

Note. A few particulars about Mrs. Jordan's children by the Duke of Clarence may be added here, though they do not directly concern her story, referring to events which occurred after her death.

George Fitzclarence, having gone out to India after the Quentin court-martial (see p. 293), was made A.D.C. to the Governor-General, the Marquis of Hastings. He rose to the rank of Colonel, and after his father's accession to the throne was created Baron Tewkesbury, Viscount Fitzclarence, and Earl of Munster. Before his death he was A.D.C. to Queen Victoria. He is stated to have committed suicide in 1842 after severe sufferings from gout, which affected his mind. He was a man of some distinction, being F.R.S., F.S.A., and in 1841 President of the Royal Asiatic Society. He married in 1819, Mary Wyndham, natural daughter of the third Earl of Egremont and sister of a brother-officer, Colonel Wyndham. He had by her a number of children, of whom the eldest son, William George, afterwards second Earl of Munster, married his cousin Wilhelmina, daughter of the Hon. John Kennedy Erskine and Augusta Fitzclarence.

Henry Fitzclarence is not recorded to have returned to England after accompanying his brother George out to India. He was a Captain in the 87th Foot when he died in 1817.

Frederick Fitzclarence, a colonel in the army at the time of his father's accession, was on May 24th, 1831, granted the title and precedence of the younger son of a marquis, as also were Adolphus and Augustus. In 1821 he married Lady Augusta Boyle, daughter of the fourth Earl of Glasgow, by whom he had issue.

Adolphus Fitzclarence, after a long career in the Navy, became Admiral in 1853. He died unmarried.

Augustus Fitzclarence, having entered the Church, as we have seen became Rector of Mapledurham, Oxfordshire. In 1845 he married Sarah Elizabeth Catherine, daughter of Lord Henry Gordon, who was much his junior. He continued to live at Mapledurham, where he must have astounded his parishioners if he acted there as his niece describes him acting in Kensington.

Sophia Fitzclarence, the date of whose birth we have been unable to find, is usually called the eldest of her family, but she was only the third among the daughters to be married. In 1825 she became the wife of Philip Charles Sidney, only son of Sir John Shelley Sidney, and a captain in the Guards. William IV. granted to her and her sisters Mary and Augusta the title and precedence of a marquis's daughter. He made Sir Philip Sidney (as he then was) equerry to himself, and in 1835 created him Baron de Lisle and Dudley. Sophia bore her husband six children. When she died in April, 1837, she was "housekeeper" at Kensington Palace.

Mary Fitzclarence married in 1824 Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Richard Fox, a son of Lord and Lady Holland but born before their marriage. After the grant of May 24th, 1831, she was styled Lady Mary Fox.

Elizabeth Fitzclarence was the first of the sisters to marry, being only nineteen when she became the wife of the seventeenth Earl of Errol.

Augusta Fitzclarence married twice: (1), in 1827, the Hon. John Kennedy Erskine, to whom she bore three children, including Wilhelmina, afterwards Countess of Munster; and (2), in 1836, Lord Frederick Gordon, third son of the Marquis of Huntly.

Amelia Fitzclarence only five months after her father's accession married Lucius, ninth Viscount Falkland. For this reason, she, like her sister Elizabeth, was not included in the grant of 1831.

At the date of his death, according to the obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, William IV. had seventeen living grandchildren of the Fitzclarence family.

CHAPTER XVIII

DISCARDED

WE have now reached the period in Mrs. Jordan's career when an abrupt and tremendous change took place. We have just seen her writing of "the tranquil pleasures of domestic happiness." She continued in enjoyment of these pleasures—marred, it is true, by the anxiety which she felt for her eldest son in the Peninsula, but nevertheless undoubtedly very real to her—up to the beginning of 1811. In this year suddenly there comes a transformation. Henceforward to the end of her days, as we follow her story, we seem to be sitting in a torture-chamber. And the puzzle of it all is that we cannot find a satisfactory answer to the question why this should have been. It is possible to explain the reasons for some of her sorrows. The ultimate cause of them all has evaded all who have written about her. The biographer is in the position of a vivisector whose knife is baffled in the attempt to reach the seat of pain.

The year 1811 opened with no premonition of impending evil. It is true that, after a total absence from the boards of eighteen months, Mrs. Jordan went down to the West of England and renewed her acquaintance with Bristol and Bath, where in April, 1809, she had met with such flattering success as an actress. It may have looked curious to outsiders that she should think it worth while to exhibit herself for a brief season at two provincial theatres when she had apparently so solid a position in private life. But the reluctance of great actresses to cut themselves off entirely from their professional work was as common then as now, and no particular comment was aroused by the announcement that Mrs. Jordan was engaged at Bath "for a few nights previously to her retiring from the stage." On January 21st she appeared at Bristol,* and on February 5th at Bath. At the latter town she played for ten nights, representing among other characters her latest London triumph, Helen Worrett in *Man and Wife.* At the close of her Bath season the *Morning Herald* says that she had been uncommonly successful; "the consideration that she was about to take a final leave of that city increased, if possible, the attraction of her talents."

After this short West Country excursion Mrs. Jordan disappears from view again for over three months. Then on June 7th she gave her services to Richard Jones, the Covent Garden actor, appearing at his benefit and playing Peggy to his Sparkish in the never-failing *Country Girl*. This was the first time she had been seen in the rebuilt Covent Garden, Kemble's folly, which opened with such bad omens in September, 1809, and cost him so dear. There was no indication that this single appearance meant anything more than that her generous heart was once more prompting her to do a fellow-artist a good turn. Before the month of June was over, however, the Covent Garden management "respectfully informed the public that Mrs. Jordan had been engaged for a few nights and would make her first appearance on Tuesday next."

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* *Times*, Jan. 29th, 1811—"Mrs. Jordan attracted a brilliant house at Bristol on Monday night." Genest (VIII., 259) gives some details of the Bath season, but does not mention Bristol.

Accordingly on July 2nd the actress played the Widow Cheerly. The *Times* criticism on the occasion is of interest:

"Mrs. Jordan made her reappearance last night and was received with universal applause. Her choice of a play, was, we think, unfortunate, for she could not have fixed on a drama more *ennuyant* than *The Soldier's Daughter*. . . . But it may be the triumph of an Actress to struggle against her part, and we will acknowledge that Mrs. Jordan struggled successfully. . . . So long as Mrs. Jordan shall confine herself to parts *d'une certaine age* and remember that there is a time when a girl's gaiety must be affected, and a girl's frolic a 'thing of other days,' she must be a distinguished favourite with the public."*

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* *Times*, July 3rd, 1811. The writer is as fond of French, where English would serve as well, as are some modern critics.

The Covent Garden season this year was prolonged almost until the end of July, and Mrs. Jordan had therefore about four weeks in all. She was seen in nothing new, playing *The Country Girl* three times, Lady Teazle twice, and others of her old parts once only. The house having closed, she accepted another short provincial engagement, and went to Cheltenham—and her doom.

It has been said that Mrs. Jordan's return to theatrical life earlier in the year failed to arouse much comment. The same is true of her Covent Garden engagement; and it is unfortunate for our purposes that, owing to the absorption of public interest at this period in State affairs—notably the arrangements for the regency of the Prince of Wales—the Press troubled little to record the doings of Mrs. Jordan. We are left to guess, without any aid from the writers of the day, why she took the engagements in London and the provinces and how she prevailed upon her protector to let her do so. We may suppose that the reason why was because she required more money for her army of pensioners, and that the Duke of Clarence consented because he had no money to give her. He must have been coming to his fatal determination to break the connection in the first half of 1811; yet it is clear from what evidence we have that Mrs. Jordan did not expect the catastrophe. It may be that the endurance of the bond for twenty years blinded her eyes to what they ought to have seen. We cannot read the account of her reception of the

Duke's message at Cheltenham and her letters written soon afterwards without recognising that she was genuinely taken by surprise to learn that she was to be cast off.

In the company at the Cheltenham Theatre was Oxberry, who had recently been playing in the Drury Lane Company at the Lyceum. It is in his previously quoted *Dramatic Biography* alone that we have any first-hand story of what happened at Cheltenham. Oxberry says that at the conclusion of her engagement Mrs. Jordan remained one extra night to play for Watson's benefit in *The Devil to Pay*. On the afternoon before the performance she received a letter from the Duke of Clarence, asking her to meet him at Maidenhead for the last time. She had a succession of fainting fits on reading the message, but nevertheless insisted on going to the theatre in the evening and duly appeared as Nell. All went well until the scene was reached where Nell is told by Jobson that the Conjuror has made her "laughing drunk." Here in vain Mrs. Jordan attempted to bring forth her inimitable laugh. She burst into tears instead. The actor who played Jobson had the intelligence to take a liberty with his words and said, "Why, Nell, the conjuror has not only made thee drunk; he has made thee crying drunk!" The situation was saved, and perhaps the audience noticed nothing. The performance being over, she went straight to a travelling chariot, still dressed as Nell, and started on her journey to Maidenhead the same night.

What passed at the meeting with the Duke was never revealed. The only hints* that we have are preserved in some letters, which Boaden was permitted to see, from Mrs. Jordan to the "confidential friend." In one written from Bushey not long after the meeting, though when her mind, as she says, was beginning to feel somewhat reconciled to the shock and surprise, she asks, "Could *you* or the *world* believe that we never had, for twenty years, the *semblance* of a *quarrel?* But this is so well known in our domestic circle that the astonishment is the greater. Money, money, my good friend, or the *want* of it, has, I am convinced, made HIM at this moment the most *wretched* of men; but, having done *wrong*, he does not like to retract. But with all his excellent qualities, his domestic *virtues*, his love for his *lovely* children, what must he not at this moment *suffer!*"

"All his letters," she continues, "are full of the most unqualified praise of my conduct; and it is the most heartfelt blessing to know that, to the best of my power, I have endeavoured to deserve it. I have received the greatest kindness and attention from the R[egen]t and every branch of the Royal Family, who, in the *most unreserved terms*, deplore this melancholy business. The whole correspondence is before the R—t, and I am proud to add that my past and present conduct has secured me a friend, who *declares* he will never forsake me. 'My forbearance,' he says, 'is beyond what he could have imagined!' But what will not a woman do who is firmly and sincerely attached? Had he left me to *starve*, I never would have uttered a word to his disadvantage. . . . And now, my dear friend, do not hear the D. of C. unfairly abused. He has done *wrong*, and he is *suffering* for it. But, as far as he has left it in his *own power*, he is doing everything KIND and NOBLE, even to the *distressing* HIMSELF. . . ."

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* Barrington (*Personal Sketches*, II., 239) no doubt intended his hints, if we should call them such, to be impressive. But they are neither informing nor do they convince us of his knowledge of the truth. He sums up thus: "The separation took effect from causes no way dishonourable to either party; it was not sought for by the royal personage, nor necessary on the part of the lady. It was too hasty to be discreet, and too much influenced by feelings of the moment to be hearty."

This is certainly one of the most illuminating of letters with regard to the character of the writer. However much we may quarrel with Mrs. Jordan's view of her protector's nobility and the Prince Regent's kindness, we are forced to recognise her generosity and inability to think evil. If she was a fool, on the testimony of this letter, at least she was a quixotic, tender-hearted fool. Too tender for success in this world, it might be said. Yet the same woman had raised herself from destitution to wealth, not only practically unaided, but with a heavy burden always upon her shoulders.

The theory which Mrs. Jordan puts forward, that it was "money, money . . . or the want of it" that furnished the explanation of the Duke of Clarence's conduct now, seems to contain, if not the whole truth, at least the greater part of the truth. Some, thinking perhaps the money motive too sordid, have tried to see some political reason for his abandonment of his mistress after so many years and after she had borne him so many children. But, though it is true that the definite madness of the King, which followed on the death of the Princess Amelia, brought about large State changes, it cannot be said that the position of the Duke of Clarence was thereby materially altered. The Prince Regent had a daughter, whom no Salic Law barred from the throne; the Duke of York was alive, if stripped of his rags of reputation; and there were the junior Dukes. The question of the royal succession, therefore, was not raised by the Duke of Clarence remaining legally unmarried.

Nor can it be supposed that the Prince Regent's moral sense was outraged by the continuance of the Bushey Park establishment. The "Jerry" who had, according to the gossips, watched his brother apply "cool cream" to the actress's face had not suddenly become a purist in the matter of his brother's conduct. It is possible, however, that Queen Charlotte may have attempted to put some pressure on the Duke of Clarence in view of the scandals with which the country was ringing about her sons. It is to be noted that her meetings with her third son at Windsor were more frequent in early 1811 than they had been for a long time. What her attitude was towards the Jordan connection is no matter for doubt. She desired to see it at an end, and Clarence respectably married to a German princess.

The Duke's friends in general saw no salvation for his financial affairs except in marriage, though many of them had no sympathy with the theory—

imported into England, as one of the critics of the day remarks, by the house of Brunswick—that a German princess was better than an English lady. That he should marry a fortune was an obvious remedy for his embarrassments. A fortune which he was actually supposed to have in view was that of the enormously rich Catherine Tilney-Long. Boaden believes that this plan of relief was suggested, though, "if this was ever a matter for deliberation in the royal mind, I am quite sure it was rejected upon *principle*." It is significant that at the very time about which we are now writing, in August, 1811, the papers chronicle a windfall to Miss Tilney-Long of £36,000, it being adjudged in Chancery that the produce of the sale of certain estates of the late Sir James Tilney was part of the real property. Ultimately she married William Wellesley Pole, son of Lord Maryborough and nephew of the Duke of Wellington.* But previously the report was wide-spread that she was about to become Duchess of Clarence. Those who cherished a sympathy with Mrs. Jordan in addition to, or because of, their dislike of the Brunswick family did not readily forget this. As late as January, 1813, one of the newspapers, looking for portents of an *Annus Mirabilis*, finds one "when a Prince of the Blood leaves a large family and turns fortune-hunter."

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* In March, 1812. A curious allusion to the Duke of Clarence, the heiress, and Mrs. Jordan, is to be found in *Drakard's Paper* the following February, when there was talk of a match between the Duke and a daughter of the Tsar. Under the heading of "Valentine, sent by His R— H— the D— of C— to the sister of our magnanimous ally the Emperor of Russia," we read:

> Ah! never in the fire was so scorched a Salamander,
> As I with love for the sister of the Emperor Alexander;
> I long'd full sore for Tilney Long—her *till* had won my soul.
> But I, unlike you Russians, was beaten by a Pole.
>
> You've heard how for a *River* I left the stormy main:
> By that far river's *Bank*, I long did graze and gain.
> Then like a Jew, as you'll allow, when you shall understand,
> I on the Jordan turned my back, to seek a wealthy land. . . .

The actual facts behind the Tilney-Long rumours will probably never be known. But we seem justified in assuming that the Duke of Clarence did resolve on dismissing Mrs. Jordan so that he might be free to marry someone who could lift him from his humiliating condition of debt, wherein he was so immersed that he was obliged, when his mistress wanted money, to let her return to the stage to earn it. This assumption, after all, does him less discredit than others which might possibly be made; for instance, that he had tired of her, or that he believed some slanderous tale about her. That slanders were not lacking we know from a letter which Mrs. Jordan wrote, according to Boaden, two days after the one which we last quoted. "Good God!" she exclaims, "what will not the world say? I received two letters this day, telling me that I was accused of intriguing with the Duke of Cumberland! I am heart-sick and almost worn out with this cruel business."

The vileness of such a charge can well be understood by those acquainted with the character of the Duke of Cumberland—the worst of the royal brothers, though the worthy Boaden "sincerely believes" him "utterly incapable of violating the confidence implied in fraternal relation." To Clarence's honour, there is no hint that he listened to the accusation, nor need we believe that any of his family stooped so low as to give it currency.

We have seen that after the interview at Maidenhead Mrs. Jordan must have gone back to Bushey Park, since it is from there that she wrote her letter exculpating the Duke of Clarence from all blame except in so far as he yielded to his need of money. He did not come to see her there,* but gave her time to look for a suitable house for herself in London. She chose Cadogan Place, Sloane Street, and from here she writes an undated letter to the usual recipient of her intimate confidences:

"The constant kindness and attention I meet with from the Duke, in every respect but personal interviews (and which depends as much on my feelings as his), has in a great measure restored me to my former health and spirits. Among many noble traits of goodness he has lately added one more, that of exonerating me from my promise of *not* returning to my profession. This he has done under the idea of its benefiting my health and adding to my pleasures and comforts: and, though it is very uncertain whether I shall ever avail myself of this kindness, yet you, if you choose, are at liberty to make it known, whether publicly or privately."

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* It may be noted that the *Times* of August 12th, 1811, mentions among the contemplated changes of residence in the royal family "the Duke of Clarence to remove from Bushey Park."

This permission to return to the stage must refer, of course, to a permanent return, ignoring the brief appearances which she had already made in 1811; and it was soon withdrawn. Her next extant letter shows that the end months of the year were employed in drawing up a treaty to regularise her separation from the Duke—the intermediary, according to Sir Jonah Barrington, being her son-in-law, now General Hawker. This letter is dated from St. James's on "Tuesday, 17th December,"* and was probably therefore written in the Duke's official apartments at the Palace immediately after she had agreed to his proposal. She says:

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I lose not a moment in letting you know that the Duke of Clarence has concluded and settled on me and his children the most liberal and generous provision; and I trust everything will sink into oblivion.

"Yours ever,
"DORA JORDAN."

What the terms of this settlement were we learn from a statement, to which we shall come later, published long after Mrs. Jordan's death by Barton, an official of the Royal Mint and an old friend and adviser of the Duke of Clarence. Briefly, the provision made for Mrs. Jordan herself was £1,500 a year, with an extra £800 a year to spend on her married daughters. She was to have the care of the four younger Fitzclarence girls as long as she did not return to the stage, being allowed during such time another £1,500 for their maintenance and £600 for a house, etc., for their use. The money was to be paid to her quarterly through Messrs. Coutts & Co. Further, "everything in the shape of a money transaction," as Barton expresses it, was brought to account. That is to say, all loans made by Mrs. Jordan to the Duke in the past were reckoned up. The interest was calculated, we are told, the total sum paid over to her, and her receipt taken.

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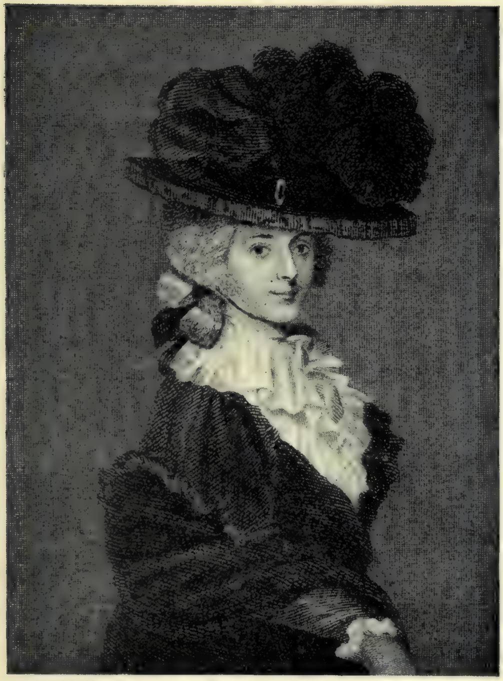
* Boaden says "Tuesday, 7th December," but the 7th was not a Tuesday, whereas the 17th was.

Boaden says of this settlement that it was "undoubtedly liberal; and, as she herself seems to think, rather larger than His Royal Highness's very confined circumstances in prudence might warrant." With regard to the money transaction, he admits the likelihood that "she might have placed some part of her fortune at the temporary disposition of her noble friend," but is satisfied with Barton's assertion that Mrs. Jordan received full repayment, with interest to date.

The author of the *Public and Private Life* waxes indignant over Boaden's placid acceptance of Barton's statement, and, seizing on his approving comment on the Prince Regent's remark that "Mrs. Jordan's forbearance was beyond what he could have imagined," lashes out in vigorous style:

"Here then we have something like an admission that the poor lady had *forbearance*, and that *a portion of her fortune might have been placed at the disposal of her protector.* We now wish to enquire *the motive of this forbearance*, that gave such delight to an exalted personage. Was it her concealment of the nature of those pecuniary transactions; their amount; non-restitution or failure in the payment of the annual allowance of a thousand pounds, which had been secured by a bond? Forbearance! A great personage to applaud the lenity of an actress towards no less an individual than his own brother? It must indeed have been a circumstance of no trifling nature that could wring such plaudit on a vagabond actress from one of the haughtiest men in existence!"

This writer is as eager to represent the Duke of Clarence in an unfavourable, as Boaden is to represent him in a favourable, light. Both had opportunities, which have long ceased to exist, of attempting to test the truth of the case, but neither availed himself of them in the scientific spirit. Nor did anyone else. In consequence, we are left with a problem that defies solution. The question of the repayment or not of the loans is obviously unanswerable, without Mrs. Jordan's receipt. No letters of hers have seen the light in which she mentions the subject. The Duke is "kind," "noble," "good," "liberal"; but she never specifies how far these qualities have carried



From an engraving by T. S. Engleheart after a painting by George Morland.

MRS. JORDAN

as *Isabella.*

[*Facing p.* 272.

him. With regard to the quarterly payments, Barton might have produced proofs from Messrs. Coutts. Who can do so now?

If the loans were repaid and the settlement duly carried out, we are in the same state of perplexity in which those of Mrs. Jordan's friends who had no desire to shield the Duke declared themselves to be. She went back to the stage and earned further large sums of money, though probably not so much as she was credited with earning. Why then did she die almost penniless? To this point we must return. We have introduced it here because, having given the terms of the settlement, we are bound to state that many did not believe that they were fulfilled and to show what plausibility there was in the contention.

At the beginning of her life after leaving Bushey Park Mrs. Jordan, to outward appearance, was favourably situated. She had taken a house in Cadogan Place, as we have seen. She took another at Hammersmith—"near the villa of the late Margravine of Anspach"—and the Duke of Clarence is stated to have paid her visits there, so that it seems probable that this was where the four younger Fitzclarence girls lived while they remained under her care. Of her married daughters she could, of course, see as much as she liked: the worst of her three sons-in-law was too much her pensioner to object to this in the case of his wife. Her sons she had always known would be claimed by their father for the service of their country and trained for Navy or Army as soon as it was possible to send them to school, so the move from Bushey Park made little difference to her with regard to them.

We have said at the beginning of this chapter that the change which befell Mrs. Jordan in 1811 was abrupt and tremendous. From the expressions which she uses herself about it, it can be seen that such a description is not too strong. But, at the same time, there was no immediate plunge into the uttermost depths of sorrow. A period followed in which it seemed as if the wound she had received might have time to heal. As a matter of fact, in it the forces of evil were gathering for other and more cruel blows.

CHAPTER XIX

BACK TO THE STAGE

A WHOLE year now elapses before we are enabled to pick up the thread of Mrs. Jordan's story again. 1812 does not indeed pass without a single reference to her; but the only one which has been discovered is unimportant. Richard Jones, it appears, had written to her, asking if she would repeat the favour of the previous year and appear at his benefit at Covent Garden. She answered in a brief note from Cadogan Place on May 16th. "Your very good friend Mrs. Lane," she says, "will explain to you the serious restrictions I am under with respect to my never returning to my profession"—and so she cannot grant his request.*

The penalty for going back, we know, was that she would forfeit the custody of her four youngest daughters. This she resolved to incur in January, 1813, and we can only conclude that some urgent pecuniary need led her to do so. (Barrington's theory that she was merely "infatuated with attachment to theatrical pursuits" is obviously prompted by his difficulty in explaining why she should want to play again when she had been so liberally treated by the Duke of Clarence.) Fond though she was of her profession, she was always a mother first, an actress second. We must suppose that it was as a mother now that she felt the necessity of accepting an engagement, and it is not difficult to guess through which child in particular the necessity came. In 1814 Frances's husband Alsop is said by Boaden to have "completed the work of riot and extravagance," so that we can scarcely err in attributing to an urgent appeal for help from Frances Mrs. Jordan's return to the stage in 1813. It must have caused her a bitter pang to lose the younger children. They were going, however, to the care of an affectionate father. To Frances she had always been father as well as mother. Now she did not refuse to take a husband's place also.

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* This letter is quoted in an article "From 'Gentleman' Jones's Letter-Box," by Mr. T. F. Dillon Croker, in the *Era Almanack* for 1876.

Before entering upon the engagement, which she doubtless had no difficulty in securing at Covent Garden, Mrs. Jordan went down to Bath for a week in January and proved once more that a theatrical farewell is not to be treated seriously. Two years ago she had "taken a final leave of Bath"; now again she was playing there—and not for the last time. Having made her trial cruise, she returned to London for more important operations.

By a curious coincidence a paper of February 10th, which announces Mrs. Jordan's forthcoming reappearance at Covent Garden that night, on the same page states that "Captain Fitzclarence [*i.e.*, George] gives a ball and supper at his mother's house in Cadogan Place to-morrow evening." It would seem therefore that, though the terms of the treaty were insisted upon, the actress resumed her profession without offending her family.

The play selected by Mrs. Jordan for her reintroduction to a London audience was *The Wonder*, in which she undertook her old part of Violante. The *Morning Post* criticises her in the following friendly strain:

"On her *entrée* she was greeted with reiterated bursts of the most ardent applause; and her performance throughout was such as fully to merit the warm testimonials of approbation by which every scene in which she appeared was honoured. She is increased in size, but there is no abatement of her natural vivacity or that wonted gaiety of deportment and sweetness of expression which have ever formed so distinguished a characteristic of the performance of this inimitable and most favoured votary of Thalia."

Far different was the attitude of the *Times*, which, for no other apparent reason than that she had been connected with the Duke of Clarence, made Mrs. Jordan the victim of what is perhaps the most scurrilous attack upon an actress in the history of dramatic criticism. The purported review of the Covent Garden performance is very long, but nearly all of it is taken up by outrageous abuse of the moral character of the impersonator of Violante.

Whom had the audience come to see? it is asked; and the answer is:

"A woman that, after forming her experience by a personal trial of almost every possible condition of life, had at length crowned her career by a full admission to the knowledge which but for her [*sic*] had been hopeless—a woman who, like Lady Wortley Montague, had been admitted into the secrets of harems and palaces, seen their full exhibition of nude beauty and costly dissoluteness, the whole interior pomp of Royal pleasure, the tribe of mutes and idiots, sultans and eunuchs, slavish passion and lordly debility."

"This woman," continues the writer, "to whom *nature* has had so few reserves—whose 'proper study,' as Pope says, has been 'man'—whose opportunities of study have been furnished in the course of a diligent life, from every rank and every age—who has, eminently above all other women, deserved the renowned motto of *humani nil alienum* . . . even she failed last night to give pleasure even in her representation of intrigue. Perhaps her failure is only a new proof of her powers. If her imitation of high life had been less accurate, it might have been more popular. The perpetual lisp—the laborious lounge—the vulgar voice—the vacant expression—the inanity of mind—that have now become her second nature during the long observation of twenty years, distinctly drawn as they were from the highest sources, were construed by the multitude, in their ignorance, dulness; and the prejudice which had determined on its own portrait of elevated manners was seriously disgusted with the accuracy that, we have not a doubt, depicted them as they are."

It might have been difficult for some writers, even in those days when the art of defamation was so sedulously studied, to find a fitting peroration to an invective like this. But to our critic no such difficulty occurred. "We must now leave Mrs. Jordan," he concluded. "The managers of a theatre are, of course, in some measure excusable for bringing forward any show that attracts a crowd, and we have no idea that they are likely to be restrained in this object by any voluntary zeal for public decency; but are there no other persons concerned? —Is not the public forced to find the alternative for this degraded woman's appearance in the decline of life, either in her own vile avarice, or in her viler breach of stipulation by those who should never abandon her to poverty? We cannot believe that the latter is the case; and if the former, what share of public approbation should be permitted to one for whom it is impossible to feel any share of personal respect? Whose sons and daughters are now strangely allowed to move among the honourable people of England, received by the Sovereign, and starting in full appetite for Royal patronage, while their mother wanders, and is allowed to wander, from barn to barn, and from town to town, bringing shame on the art which she practises, and double shame on those who must have it in their power to send her back to penitence and obscurity?"

It is pleasing to note that this monstrous pretence of dramatic criticism was not allowed to pass uncensured by other newspapers. The *News* three days later, after quoting the last paragraph from the *Times*, remarks: "There is a vituperable kind of malice in this attack, which we grieve to see in the columns of one of our Journals which makes the greatest pretensions to impartiality on all subjects. The expression, '*a degraded woman*' cannot fail of exciting disgust in the mind of every generous man. In contributing to the amusements of the public Mrs. Jordan appears as the servant of the public —and in that light only should she be judged. . . . We know nothing of the *quantum* of her allowance from the Duke of Clarence, but whatever it is, it must be absorbed in the maintenance and education of the children she has by him."

The *Morning Post* also protested. "How Mrs. Jordan has acted her part in the great Theatre of the World," it wrote, "is not a question for the public; nor whether from a paucity of means, or a craving of avarice, or the desertion of others, she is induced to appear on the stage."

The theatre-going public also rallied to support its former favourite. An opportunity of showing its sympathy was afforded to it a few days after the *Times* attack, when Mrs. Jordan was in the bill again and in *The Devil to Pay* was playing her old part of Nell. When the Conjuror's remark was reached, "You have an honest face and need not be ashamed of showing it anywhere," the entire audience, we are told, gave three tributary shouts of approbation to the just sentiment, and Mrs. Jordan was so much affected by this warm and unexpected testimonial of the public favour, that she burst into a flood of tears. *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, from which we take this account, comments: "We hope that her ungenerous enemy was in the house on this occasion; and if he was, we do not think that his feelings could be very enviable."

How bitterly Mrs. Jordan felt the cruelty of her enemy in the *Times* is shown by a letter which she sent to the Press. It is worthy of note that in it she is more at pains to defend the Duke of Clarence than herself. As it appears in one of the papers on February 20th, the letter runs as follows:

"SIR,

"Though I did not see the morning print that contained the paragraph alluded to in your liberal and respectable paper of yesterday, yet I was not long left in ignorance of the abuse it poured out against me. *This* I could silently have submitted to, but I was by no means aware that the writer of it had taken the opportunity of throwing out insinuations which he thought might be injurious to a no less honourable than illustrious Personage.

"In the love of truth, and in justice to His Royal Highness, I think it my duty publicly and unequivocally to declare that his liberality towards me has been noble and generous in the *highest degree;* but, not having it in his power to extend his bounty beyond the term of his own existence, he has with his accustomed goodness and consideration allowed me to endeavour to make that provision for myself which an event, that better feelings than those of *interest* make me hope I shall never live to see, would entirely deprive me of.

"This then, Sir, is my motive for returning to my profession. I am too happy in having every reason to hope and believe that, under these circumstances, I shall not offend the public at *large* by seeking their support and *protection:* and while I feel that I possess those I shall patiently submit to that species of unmanly persecution which a female so peculiarly situated must always be subject to. Ever ready to acknowledge my deficiencies in every respect, I trust I may add that I shall never be found wanting in candour and gratitude—not forgetful of the care that every individual should feel for the good opinion of the public.

"I am, Sir,
"Your much obliged, humble servant,
"DORA JORDAN."

The *Times* itself reproduced this letter on February 23rd, making no comment on it, but alluding to it indirectly in the dramatic column, where the return to Covent Garden of Mrs. Campbell (formerly Miss Wallis) is noticed and her emergence from private life heartily welcomed.

There was no repetition of the gross personal attack upon the unfortunate actress, but the campaign against the Duke of Clarence continued in that portion of the Press which joined him with the Regent and the Duke of York as objects of detestation. Mrs. Jordan, however, took no further part in the controversy.

But for the attitude of the *Times*, the reception accorded to Mrs. Jordan in the spring of 1813 was gratifyingly friendly. The critics for the most part, if they did find her grown stouter and older since they had last seen her, at least conveyed their impression in no unkind way. The *Morning Post*, for instance, speaking of her revival of *The Country Girl*, says that Mrs. Jordan, "though rather lusty, made a decorous epicene character," "her male dress was of a decent and becoming description," and her acting "left the critic little else to do than to bestow praise." *Drakard's Paper*, having paid a tribute to the continued excellence of her performances and congratulated the London public on her return to one of the theatres, added the suggestion that the actress's years and personal appearance should inculcate the propriety of exercising some *selection* in the parts which she now undertook to fill. "We cannot easily find words to give the reader an idea of the sudden turn we experienced, when after hearing with delight Mrs. JORDAN's mad-cap rustic laugh, so exquisitely adapted to the character, coming from behind the scenes, and ushering in the young hoyden, Miss Prue, she plunged bounce upon our astonished sight with the gambols of fifteen, but the weight of fifty—and with a plenitude of form that recalled to our mind the satiating ripeness of autumn, instead of the tempting promise of spring."*

Even that warm admirer Boaden, it must be noted, is compelled to admit that the loss of youth had impaired the charm of the actress's person, and he hastens over the record of her last two London seasons—"for who," he asks, "likes to see the struggles of the brightest powers in their decay?" Nor, indeed, was there much that calls for attention after the first few nights of her return to Covent Garden. No new characters were assigned to her between then and the closing of the theatre in July. She revived her impersonations of Rosalind, Lady Teazle, Miss Hoyden,† Beatrice (*The Pannel*), etc., and at her benefit on June 1st appeared as the Widow Belmour in *The Way to Keep Him*.

That Mrs. Jordan went "cruising" on the completion of the London season there can be little doubt; but in what direction we do not know. For this period her letters fail us, and the early biographers hurry past it to reach the catastrophe of 1814. We only find her again at Bath in January of that year. This was her real farewell visit to the place, but she did not know it. She played ten nights and introduced to her audience on January 11th one new part, Clarinda in *The*

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* Genest, who knew Mrs. Jordan at this period, laments that she persevered in playing youthful parts when her personal appearance disqualified her for them, and that "at one time, in order to dress like a young woman, she was so injudicious as to expose more of her person to view than was proper at her time of life."

† Byron records in his *Journal* for March 10th, 1814: "Went to the play with Hobhouse. Mrs. Jordan superlative in Hoyden."

Suspicious Husband. According to Genest, she had contemplated playing this in London, but told him that she would never act it again after Bath, as she was not satisfied with her own performance. Genest, however, thought her Clarinda as good as her other fine ladies—which, of course, is not the highest praise he could bestow. He tells another story of her now which is worth repeating. Some of Mrs. Jordan's real friends, it seems, wished her to recognise the flight of time and to take up elderly characters like Mrs. Malaprop; but the very mention of the idea offended her. The stage-manager at the Bath theatre suggested that she should play *The Old Maid.* "No," she replied, "I played it for a frolic at my benefit, but do not mean to play such parts in a common way."

She had indeed represented the character of the Old Maid at least twice, on benefit nights, on the first occasion as long ago as 1795. But then she was little over thirty, now she was fifty. Need more be said ?

From Bath Mrs. Jordan went, as in the previous year, to Covent Garden, and there, from February to the beginning of June, she fulfilled her last engagement on the London stage. Rosalind, Peggy, Nell, Violante, Miss Hoyden, Beatrice were all seen in turn, and then owing to "serious indisposition" she was obliged to withdraw. On April 14th, she was back again in *As You Like It*, and in the following week created her last original part, Barbara Green in *Debtor and Creditor.* Finally on June 1st she concluded her engagement. It was "Gentleman"

Jones's benefit, and she acted Lady Teazle to his Charles Surface. The newspapers of the day took no note of the performance, nor was it specially advertised.

This appearance in *The School for Scandal*, though it was her unconscious farewell to London, was by no means the end of Mrs. Jordan's theatrical career. But after this the player is merged in the woman, and her professional activity, great as it was in various parts of the country, becomes of little importance in her story. She was acting no longer because she loved the stage, but because she eagerly desired to make money. It was supposed by her contemporaries that as long as she continued to play she succeeded in earning as good an income as she made at the zenith of her career. Sir Jonah Barrington indeed asserts that the very last year she remained in England brought her a clear profit of near £7,000. "I *cannot* be mistaken in this statement; for my authority could not err on that point." As we are not told who this authority was, we cannot accept the assertion. Barrington is too obviously pleading the case of the Duke of Clarence when he combats what he calls the malicious representations of Mrs. Jordan having been left in straitened circumstances, and claims that she remained to the last "in full possession of all the means of comfort—nay, if she chose it, of luxury and splendour." We may readily believe, however, that by unremitting industry after her return to her profession, Mrs. Jordan made a very considerable income. We have now to see how she lost it.

CHAPTER XX

THE STORM BURSTS

THE absence of any intimate letters written by Mrs. Jordan during the years 1812-13 conceals from us the progress of events towards her downfall. Although the metaphor of the bursting thunder-storm, which we owe to Mrs. Jordan herself, is appropriate enough with regard to what befell her, from the onlooker's point of view the figure of an exploding mine is still fitter. We do not see the underground work of the enemy, but suddenly all is upheaved. To be precise, there are two explosions, though the biographers of Mrs. Jordan have certainly failed to make this clear. In 1814 Alsop's treachery culminates and lays all waste. With a great effort his mother-in-law repairs the damage, when March, whom she trusted as she never trusted Alsop, fires the second mine and leaves a shattered ruin, from which Mrs. Jordan escapes only to die. Many have overlooked March's share in the catastrophe, attributing all to his brother-in-law, and thereby considerably increasing the mystery of Mrs. Jordan's end. When we appreciate that she was doubly betrayed, it is at least easier to understand why she should have lost the courage which had been hers so remarkably throughout life and sunk under the accumulated miseries of her last years.

Alsop "completed the work of riot and extravagance," Boaden tells us, in 1814. He was shipped off to India, nominally as under-secretary to Lord Moira, on the understanding that he was to send for his wife when he should be established. In the meantime he left her on her mother's hands. There are no details of his behaviour. We may be sure, however, that if any of his debts were paid Mrs. Jordan paid them. The marriage settlement which she had made on Frances was all gone, and Frances was entirely dependent on her again. She considered it necessary, first of all, that Alsop's life should be additionally insured; whether he or she had originally insured it does not appear, but in all probability it was she. Now, at any rate, the money was demanded from her. That the demand embarrassed her considerably is shown by some letters to a friend which Boaden was allowed to reproduce in his *Life*—the friend being March, though Boaden, for some reason, refrains from more than vague hints that this was the case and cuts out the name where it occurs. One letter gives so much insight into Mrs. Jordan's position and feelings at the time that no apology need be made for quoting it in full.

She was, when she wrote, on a northern tour.* From her correspondence we know that early in November, 1814, she was at Whitehaven, having come from Sheffield, and that she was then expecting to go to Newcastle and Edinburgh. At the beginning of December she was in Carlisle, whence on the 3rd she sent the letter to which we refer.

"I was prevented," she says, "by illness both of body and mind, the last time I wrote, from saying one half of what it is necessary should now be perfectly understood with regard to Mrs. Alsop. You say that in order to assist her you must expend £30 or £40. I am sorry for it, as it will not be in my power to *reimburse* you, and trust the love and duty you owe to your own family will interfere and point out to you the injustice of it. You talk of Mrs. A.'s *desire* to go to her husband. If it were affection or duty that prompted her, I should pity, though even in that case it would at this time be out of my power to forward her wishes: but *this* is not the case, as you must know. I have at present melancholy but far better claims on me—claims that, to my bitter remorse, I have almost deprived myself of the means of affording to two amiable children by having lavished them on *one*. She never could have been sensible of the sacrifice, or I should not have met with such *ingratitude*. For the last time, dear ——, shall this subject ever employ my pen, and I trust you will give it the attention I feel due to it. In the event of Mrs. A.'s going abroad, I must sink another £100 per year to the £260 (independent of the additional insurance on A.'s life), making in all near £400 a year. He has no employment, and how will he support her? and am I to have the *additional* misery of thinking that she may be *starving* in a *foreign* land? I therefore, for the *last time*, most solemnly declare to her, through you, that these are the last and only propositions that shall ever be offered. That she shall go to her uncle in Wales, when I will pay £40 a year for her board and lodging, allowing her £50 a year for her clothes, till such time her husband may be able to maintain her abroad, when every exertion shall be made to send her out. If she refuses this, I here *swear*, by the most heart-breaking oath that presents itself to my tortured mind, that 'may I never again see *those two sacrificed young men*, if I ever (if possible) think of her again as a child that has any claim on me.' And I shall be led to doubt the affection of anyone who may, by a mistaken motive, endeavour to make me break an oath so seriously and solemnly taken. If she has an atom of feeling and wishes to regain any part of my affection, she will *instantly* agree to this; if NOT, the £90 a year shall be regularly paid to her so long as I have it to give. Let her not look on this as a *banishment:* let her look on the fate of two gallant young men, submitting to a cruel exile without a *murmur*, whatever they may feel. I shall send a plan to Mrs. Williams, and shall be under the disagreeable necessity, my dear ——, of withdrawing from you the little addition I could have wished to continue to you. When everything is adjusted, it will be impossible for me to remain in England. I shall therefore go *abroad*, appropriating as much as I can spare of the remainder of my income to pay my debts. And now, my dear ——, for the last time on this cruel subject, *adieu!* I write this from a sleepless pillow. God bless you all! I shall be home by the 15th or 16th. I have been obliged to give up all my engagements. Love to all.

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* Perhaps it was during this tour that Mrs. Jordan paid the visit to York recorded in the *Public and Private Life*, p. 72. The author says that he "knew Thalia at York when her means had become scanty compared with what she had formerly enjoyed." But when a poverty-stricken actor wrote to her for aid, she sent a five-pound note with the following message:

"Sir,—I have received your distressing letter, for to a mind ill at ease any discordant theme becomes oppressive. The trifle I remit I beg you will accept as such, and not conceive it the tribute that would have been paid to your talents, in happier days, by

"Sir, Your obedt. Servt., etc.
"D. Jordan."

"Your affectionate
"D. J.

"For the little time I shall be in C[adogan] Place, after the departure of all happiness, tell dear Lucy that I will pay her three guineas a week for myself, Miss S[ketchley], and the two servants, finding our own tea, sugar, and wine. Be silent on the subject of my going abroad, or it may *embarrass* me."

To the "two sacrificed young men" we shall come presently. Certain points stand out clearly in the letter: (1) that Mrs. Jordan was on the most friendly terms with March, to whom she had been making an extra allowance, now impossible to continue; (2) that she had given up all confidence in Frances Alsop, though not all love for her; and (3) that she already entertained the idea of going to live abroad.

Two more letters to March are dated from Carlisle on December 4th and 5th respectively. The first is about Frances, or Fanny. "I will spare what I can," says Mrs. Jordan, "to send her to Wales respectable and enable her uncle to receive her comfortably. . . . If she and Mrs. Williams should prefer living in any cheap part of France, they may do it to more advantage. It is very probable that I shall find it necessary to live there the best part of every year."

The second refers to her own movements. "I shall be home by January 15th or 16th. Truly sorry am I to be under the necessity of disturbing dear Dora; sooner than do so, if I was not very unwell, I would take lodgings. The enclosed to the Gen—l [Hawker] contains a proposition similar to the one I made to you, concerning the house; which, if it does not appear eligible to him, I shall dispose of as soon as possible; and, if not able to follow my profession, I shall immediately go abroad."

The house in Cadogan Place, it appears, was in the absence of Mrs. Jordan on tour occupied by the Hawkers, with whom the Marches were temporarily staying; for it is Dora March who is to be disturbed, whereas Lucy Hawker is to receive three guineas a week for taking in her mother, with her companion and two servants. Further, we see that March had received an offer of the lease on certain terms, which he refused, and that the same terms were now offered to Hawker. Otherwise the house was to be sold.

It is difficult to say which trouble contributed most to the illness of body and mind of which Mrs. Jordan speaks in her first letter from Carlisle; the bad behaviour of the Alsops or the fate which had befallen her two eldest sons. The latter certainly seem to have been treated with great severity considering their youth and the fact that a number of older men were involved with them. In October, 1814, Colonel George Quentin was court-martialled on various charges of neglect of duty as commanding officer in France, earlier in the year. His accusers were all officers of his regiment, the 10th Hussars, including Captain George, and Lieutenant Henry, Fitzclarence. Quentin was found guilty, in one instance, of leaving some of the divisions under him without orders when attacked by the enemy, and reprimanded. But his subordinates were more severely punished for being unmindful of "the responsibility of those who become accusers of their superior" and were all removed from the 10th Hussars to other regiments. The two young Fitzclarences were ordered to India, with a request that the strictest discipline should be exercised over them in consequence of their recent conduct. Their new commanding officer had the courage, on receiving the request (of which the author is said to have been a "Colonel M'M——"), to reply that he only retained the letter that he might have the power to expose the writer, should such unfair and offensive conduct be repeated, and that no British officers would be dictated to in their line of conduct with those under their command.

The two Fitzclarences left England toward the end of the year, the elder with a hope of being allowed to join Lord Moira's staff when he reached India. There was a suggestion, made by Frances Alsop herself, that she should be allowed to travel with her half-brothers. March sent it on to Mrs. Jordan, who wrote to George, "without endeavouring to prejudice in the smallest degree," and was not at all surprised at his answer. It could not be, he declared. "M[arch] did not mention anything about Fanny; but I cannot take her on board the King's ship. It will be impossible; I would not shackle myself with her. MacMahon gives me the most *certain assurances* of Alsop being provided for. I will do all I can; but I cannot take Fanny out with us. It will cost £3,000 to get us out to India—where is all this to come from?"*

We may hazard a guess that some at least of the £3,000 was found by Mrs. Jordan; for this would help to explain why she was so embarrassed

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* Letter of December 2nd, 1814 (Boaden II., 302–3). It was enclosed in Mrs. Jordan's letter to March of December 4th.

From an engraving by W. H. Cook after a painting by James Atkinson.

GEORGE FITZCLARENCE, EARL OF MUNSTER.

[*Facing p.* 294.

over Alsop's insurance money and could not pay back to March the £30 or £40 he had advanced to Fanny.

George and Henry Fitzclarence went to India, never to be seen by their mother again. Fanny, on the other hand, refused to go into banishment, either in Wales or France. At least we hear nothing of a retirement, even for a time, and we shall meet her again in London immediately after her mother's flight. A short gap occurs in Mrs. Jordan's story in the first half of 1815. The only professional engagement in that year of which Boaden knows is one of ten days at Margate in July and August, which, as he says, "closed Thalia's theatrical existence."* From a statement by March, we learn that she left England in August (this should be September) and that up to that time she had been residing under the same roof with him. Apparently General Hawker did not accept her offer of the lease, and she therefore established herself at Cadogan Place with the Marches until she should put her affairs in order. It was here that the second and more fatal mine exploded under her.

Although it involves a certain amount of repetition, we shall now attempt to give a consecutive account of Mrs. Jordan's final disasters in England, making use of some documents, among others, with which we shall meet again when we reach the controversies which followed her death.

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* Herbert, in his *Irish Varieties*, says that he saw Mrs. Jordan shortly before her final departure from England and that she was then playing at Birmingham under Elliston. He is very circumstantial in his account, which is more convincing than what he writes of Mrs. Jordan's early days.

The first suspicion of unusual pecuniary dealings between March and his mother-in-law—dealings, that is to say, other than the making of an allowance by her to him and periodical gifts—is conveyed in two short letters taken in conjunction. In the first she writes to March from Whitehaven on November 11th, 1814. "I am truly sorry you have not been *comfortable*," she says. "What has been the matter?" The second, which bears no date, runs as follows:

"My ever dear——*

"I thank you for your kind and considerate letter, and reap all the consolation from it that my present melancholy situation will allow of. I inclose the notes. I have just written to dear——.

"God bless you all!

"D. J."

Between these two letters had come one from March, stating the reason why he was not "comfortable" and asking for his mother-in-law's assistance. The "notes" must be the securities which March confesses that he induced her to give on his behalf. According to his account, it was £2,000 which she was suddenly called upon to find in the autumn of 1815. Barton, however, who had drawn up the parting settlement between Mrs. Jordan and the Duke of Clarence, says that in September, 1815, he most unexpectedly received a note from her, requesting him to call. "I found her in tears," he continues, "and under much embarrassment from a circumstance that had burst upon her, as she said 'like a thunder-storm.' She found herself involved to a considerable amount by securities which all at once appeared against her, in the form of bonds and promissory notes, given incautiously by herself to relieve, as she thought, from trifling difficulties a near relative, in whom she had placed the greatest confidence. Acceptances had been given by her in blank, upon stamped paper, which she supposed were for small amounts, but which afterwards appear to have been laid before her capable of carrying larger amounts."

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* Boaden leaves out the names, as usual.

Barton therefore charges March—suppressing his name, however—with fraud of a particularly base kind. There can be no doubt that he is justified in the accusation. The letter written by Mrs. Jordan from Paris on January 18th, 1816, confirms the statement that she gave March blank acceptances. The superficial candour of March's own confession must not be allowed to mislead us. Although his account is plausible of his irritation at the way in which he was asked to swear that he had not involved Mrs. Jordan to a still further extent than she knew, it is to be noted that he can only excuse his continued failure to swear on the assumption that a letter of his, containing an offer to do so, was held up. And yet he says himself that she had, on leaving England, deputed a friend (in another place he speaks of "persons") to make all necessary arrangements with her creditors. Had March been anxious to relieve her mind, could he not easily have communicated with her deputies the fact, if it was a fact, that they had already the full list of creditors in their hands?

To what extent Mrs. Jordan appreciated the extent of the disaster which had befallen her when she wrote to Barton, we cannot judge. At any rate she knew enough to be utterly panic-struck. All that she could think about was the danger of immediate arrest, since she could not find the money. "She wished," Barton says, "to treat all her claimants fairly and honourably, and to save, if possible, the wife and children of the person who had so deceived her from utter ruin. She could not enter into negotiations with her creditors unless at large; and apprehending that, if she remained in England, that would not long be the case, she instantly adopted the resolution of going to France." Barton claims that the suggestion was his own; but we know that the idea at least had long been in her mind.

March corroborates Barton as to Mrs. Jordan's reason for immediate flight. "She left England for France," he says, "with the intention of remaining away some ten days, the time computed necessary to place matters in that state as to render her person legally secure from arrest."

We have seen that nine months previously Mrs. Jordan had contemplated the idea of selling her house in Cadogan Place and retiring abroad. She had apparently, however, taken no steps to dispose of the house since Hawker had refused it. Now, in her panic, she got rid of her lease and furniture at a ruinous loss. The *Public and Private Life* records the manner of this. Mrs. Jordan applied to a Mr. Charles Wigley—"who possessed the spacious apartments formerly existing in Spring Gardens and appropriated to the display of public exhibitions"—and suggested that he should buy her goods, pictures, etc. He called in an auctioneer, the father of Clara Fisher, and took him with him to Mrs. Jordan's house, without telling him who was the owner. Fisher made a rapid survey of the contents and was then taken to a neighbouring coffee-house, where he informed Wigley that the furniture was well worth £300 in the house, or £220 if removed. Wigley took him back to Cadogan Place and introduced him to Mrs. Jordan—to his astonishment. But it was not until Fisher had retired that Wigley struck his bargain. Mrs. Jordan added the lease of the premises, worth about £500, and accepted just one hundred guineas in all—"yielding to Mr. Wigley a very snug profit, if he could reconcile the transaction to his conscience," says the *Public and Private Life.* "This melancholy fact tends to prove two things," the writer comments: "first the unsuspecting and easy mind of Mrs. Jordan, and lastly her anxiety to conclude the sale without the least delay in order that she might quit the country with all the expedition possible."

We see now the woman who had been giving all her life—giving to mother, brother, sister, lover, daughters, sons, sons-in-law, fellow-professionals, anyone who might ask her for charity—giving with no sparing hand, but generously, extravagantly—we see her now flying from England to avoid imprisonment for a debt, not her own, which the real debtor declares to have amounted to only £2,000; and not one person makes any attempt to help her. The representative of her protector for twenty years goes to visit her, finds her "in tears, and under much embarrassment . . . fearful of immediate arrest"; but he makes no suggestion that he attempted in any way to comfort her, much less to offer her any money to stave off the danger overhanging her. Barton knew under what obligations Mrs. Jordan had laid the Duke, his master; he probably knew also of her liberality, after the separation, to her sons by the Duke. But, reviewing the business eight years later, after having stated that the settlement of 1811 provided £1,500 a year for Mrs. Jordan herself and £800 for her three married daughters, he evidently considered that honour had been satisfied. It pained him that anyone should suggest that the money was not paid. It did not occur to him, apparently, that, even if it was, there was still a balance of gratitude, of sentiment, which had been left unsettled.

The sinister suggestion was made, after Mrs. Jordan's death, by enemies of the Duke of Clarence, that the unhappy woman was encouraged to think her situation in 1815 more serious than it actually was, in order that she might be frightened into living out of England, where her presence was inconvenient to her former protector, now on the marriage market.* Boaden seems to hint at a much milder version of this story when he says that, while it was very natural that the daughters with whom she lived should wish to possess Mrs. Jordan wholly, "*elsewhere* there might be an impression that her happiness could best be secured by her removal from their influence." In both cases we should have to attribute to Barton, as the only medium of communication beween the Duke and Mrs. Jordan, a rôle about which he is himself discreetly silent. He took advantage of a situation which he had not himself brought about to remove Mrs. Jordan from England, in the first case for the Duke's convenience, in the second for her own supposed good.

It must be remembered that there is no evidence whatever that the flight into France was occasioned by anything more than Mrs. Jordan's own panic terror over the discovery of what March had done and her liability to arrest if she could not find the money demanded. The motives for her continuance in exile are another matter.

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* The *Public and Private Life* expresses the firm conviction that Mrs. Jordan's timid mind was wrought upon "for the express purpose of urging her to quit the country, it having been pre-arranged she should never return." The theory is advanced that "she was in possession of secrets worth knowing and might have blown a mine calculated to set St. James's in an uproar." The author evidently felt the necessity of explaining how exiling Mrs. Jordan to France would close her mouth—and so he accepted the evidence of John Greatorex about her environment by spies, of which we shall hear shortly.

Barton's remark that "it was at my suggestion Mrs. Jordan adopted the resolution of leaving this country" (below, p. 336) no doubt aroused a suspicion against him which he had not anticipated.

CHAPTER XXI

EXIT

MRS. JORDAN left England, according to Sir Jonah Barrington, accompanied not only by Miss Ketchley (by whom he means Miss Sketchley) but also by Colonel Hawker, the General's brother; "but, as she wished during her residence in France to be totally retired, she took no suite." This addition of Barrington's is sufficiently ludicrous—until we remember that he is special pleader for the Duke of Clarence and cannot therefore admit that the Duke's mistress was unprovided by him with anything she might desire and he could give.

That Miss Sketchley accompanied her we know. As for Colonel Hawker, though we hear no more about him, he may have escorted the two women across the Channel and helped them to select a place of residence at Boulogne. The choice of Boulogne in itself seems to indicate the intention of a short stay only. A cottage was hired "at Marquetra, about a quarter of a mile from the gate of the fortress," says Barrington, who visited both this cottage and Mrs. Jordan's last lodging at

Saint-Cloud. It was very small but neat and cheerful, and attached to it were a small flower and fruit garden and a paddock of less than half an acre. The landlady, Madame Ducamp, who lived in an adjoining cottage, though full of curiosity and of professed good-nature, was unable to give Barrington much information about her former tenant—save that she was "*sans doute un ange supérieur*," and that, "though so very poor, she paid her *louage* like a goddess." Her servant Agnes, however, was more communicative. Mrs. Jordan, according to her, had shown the strictest economy at Boulogne; through necessity, being very, very poor indeed. Her whole time was passed in anxious expectation of letters from England, and on English mail-days she was particularly miserable. The garden and her guitar were her only resources. Mrs. Jordan had made a great impression on her (though they could only converse in signs, neither knowing the other's language!), and she stated with pride that she had often had the pleasure of playing and singing Madame to sleep. No mention was made either by Agnes or by her mistress of Miss Sketchley or any other attendant on the English lady.

In this evidence collected by Barrington, our only authority for the Boulogne period, two points stand out notably: the extreme poverty, which both mistress and maid noticed in their visitor; and her anxiety about letters from England. The persistence of various writers, above all Barrington, in maintaining that Mrs. Jordan was really quite well off to the very last has made the poverty at

Boulogne, and in Paris, difficult to understand. But no one has attempted to deny that the expectation of letters from England was the great and growing obsession of the exile's last months of life. She wished to hear in the first place that her representatives in England had come to an arrangement with the creditors from whose claims she had fled. Only by this had she hopes of seeing any of her numerous family again. And while she still remained in unwilling exile she wished to hear how the members of that family were faring, above all what was happening to Dora March and her children. No news came to her concerning the creditors, and about her family the principal item was very bad.

Frances Alsop on her mother's departure from England, if not before, had taken up her abode with the Marches. From their house she commenced a series of violent attacks upon the Duke of Clarence because the allowance which her mother had formerly been able to make her had failed.* The Duke was annoyed and suspected March's complicity. But, in Boaden's language, the justice and temper of the great personage did not launch displeasure on supposition. He sent Barton and another to call upon March, who succeeded in satisfying them that he had nothing to do with the attacks and had remonstrated with Mrs. Alsop repeatedly. Now he insisted that no more such letters should proceed out of his house. Thereupon Frances abruptly departed one evening and, as Boaden says, "assumed a conduct which cannot but be deeply regretted." She went on the stage at once; but this is not the conduct referred to. We must leave Boaden to explain in his own words:

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* Boaden, II., 319; and see Barton's statement below.

"This was put out of all doubt by the condition in which Mrs. Alsop appeared before a London audience as an actress on the 18th of October, 1815. It will be remembered that her husband embarked for India the year *before*. Thus a critic of the time spake with more wisdom than he was aware of when he wrote the following sentence as to her Rosalind, 'Of her figure it would be unjust at present to speak.' . . . I did not myself see her the first night, and when I did found that my best course was to close my eyes and allow my ears for a few seconds to deceive me. . . . She acted Rosalind five times and the Country Girl once—and that, probably, was as much as she could venture before Christmas."*

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* Whatever her moral character, Genest declares Mrs. Alsop far from a bad actress. Hazlitt's opinion of her acting is better known than it would otherwise be because he makes it the peg for a celebrated criticism of Mrs. Jordan. (*View of the English Stage*, p. 168, "Mrs. Alsop's Rosalind," Covent Garden, October 22nd, 1815.) He declares Mrs. Alsop to be "a very nice little woman, who acts her part very sensibly and cleverly, and with a certain degree of arch humour, but no more like her mother than we to Hercules. . . . Mrs. Alsop has nothing luxurious about her, and Mrs. Jordan was nothing else. Her voice is clear and articulate but not rich or flowing. In person she is small, and her face is not prepossessing. . . . Lively good sense is what she possesses."

In his *Diary* for February 5th, 1817, Crabb Robinson writes: "I had to-day the pleasure of being reminded of old times and of having old enjoyments brought to my mind. I saw for the first time Mrs. Alsop, Mrs. Jordan's daughter, the plainest woman, I should think, who ever ventured on the stage. She, nevertheless, delighted me by the sweet tones of her voice, which frequently startled me by their resemblance to her mother's. Mrs. Alsop has the same, or nearly the same, hearty laugh as Mrs. Jordan, and similar frolicsome antics."

Are we not justified in assuming that part of the anguish of mind from which Mrs. Jordan suffered in her last year and a half was due to Frances Alsop's fall? We have seen her realise in 1814 that Frances had no love for her worthless husband. But this was very different from the open disgrace which had now overtaken her daughter, a disgrace worse even than if Frances had followed in her own footsteps and had never reached the summit of respectability in the eyes of an unmarried mother—legal marriage.

One letter which Mrs. Jordan probably received while she was at Boulogne * is known. It is from her son Frederick Fitzclarence, at the time on a visit to Paris with his sister Sophia. In judging this artless production it must be remembered that its author was a boy of sixteen.

"My dear Mother," he writes,

"My dear Sophia has been very low-spirited since she received my ever-dear Dora's letter; and she took the earliest opportunity to

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* This (undated) letter is addressed to "Mrs. James, Post Office, Boulogne." The Marches and Mrs. Alsop were only told to write to "Mrs. James," through a third party, in January, 1816, when Mrs. Jordan had moved or was moving to Paris; and Barrington says that Mme. Ducamp recognised Mrs. Jordan's name, though herself pronouncing it scarcely recognisably, when he visited Marquetra. Still, so great was Mrs. Jordan's privacy at Boulogne that it is very likely she had her letters addressed under an assumed name to the Post Office. Otherwise, if Frederick Fitzclarence wrote after the move, he wrote from Paris to his mother in Paris, *viâ* Boulogne.

The letter shows that the Fitzclarences kept up their friendly feelings for Dora and Lucy.

From a lithograph by Count D'Orsay.

LORD FREDERICK FITZCLARENCE.

[*Facing p.* 306.

speak to Mrs. Arbuthnot, who would speak to her husband about it. I am afraid we shall not come home for this long time. I long to see dear Lucy. The Arbuthnots are very kind to me. I have got a room in Paris. Hale is better behaved. I have had a horse shot. Tell all about the [? Marches]. If you want money for them, don't ask me for it, but take *my* allowance for them; because, with a little care, I could live on my father's till *their* business is a little settled. Now do as I ask you—mind you do, for they have always been *so kind* to us *all:* and, if I can make any return, I should be a devil if I did not. So take my next quarter; and, as you may want to give them some, do that for *my sake*.

"I am very well.

"God bless you!

"FRED. FITZCLARENCE.

"P.S. Sophia will write to you on Thursday."

At the beginning of January, 1816, it became necessary to send over to England to draw the quarterly allowance from Coutts's. March's statement gives an account of Miss Sketchley's visit to London for this purpose, which is a very important part of his confession or defence, whichever we choose to call it. He has not the slightest doubt, it may be noted, that the allowance was "paid with the greatest punctuality quarterly, without demur, drawback, or impediment," down to April, 1816. Miss Sketchley, according to him, from the moment of her arrival in England pursued a very offensive line of conduct toward Mrs. Jordan's daughters—by whom he must mean his own wife and Frances Alsop. On himself she called, peremptorily and insultingly, to make oath that Mrs. Jordan was not liable to any claims beyond those of which she already knew. She coupled her demand with "base insinuations"—concerning Mrs. Alsop, we may wonder. March says that he "justly doubted" whether the demand was really Mrs. Jordan's wish and in his irritation refused to take the oath required; whereon, the same day, Miss Sketchley returned to France, "and there is little doubt but then, for the first time, Mrs. Jordan did become 'apprehensive.'"

March certainly does not err by overstatement when he says that on Miss Sketchley's return, without having succeeded in obtaining the oath, Mrs. Jordan became apprehensive. The state of her mind is shown with painful clearness in a letter written to Barton immediately after being rejoined by her companion. March, of course, had seen this letter when he made his defence, for Barton published it in his communication to the *Morning Chronicle* in January, 1824, and he could not therefore pretend that his mother-in-law was not distracted by his conduct, as represented to her by Miss Sketchley. Hence his insistence on the evil part played by the companion.

Mrs. Jordan's letter is dated from Paris, January 18th, 1816. We do not know when she moved from Boulogne, but we learn from Barrington that she went first to the Versailles neighbourhood. It is possible that the failure of the mission to March was the cause of the move, since it seemed to postpone the possibility of a return to England. The letter is as follows:

"Dear Sir,

"I have forborn writing to you that I might occupy as little of your time as possible. My spirits are in so disturbed a state that my weak hand is scarcely able to trace the still more feeble efforts of my mind. . . . He* assures you that I am in possession of the names of my creditors, to whom he has made me answerable by filling up those blank acceptances that I so unguardedly gave him; and *yet declines* making an oath to that purpose. This has caused me much uneasiness, for it appears to me *vague*, if not *equivocal.*

"I can solemnly declare that the names I sent to you are the only ones I know of, and the greatest part utter strangers to me.

"I was in hopes that, not only out of humanity and justice to me, but for his own sake, he would have done it voluntarily, as it would have been the means of removing, in a great degree, the unpleasant impressions such a determination might cause in the minds of those who still remain anxious for his future well-doing. I do not command or enforce it, but *entreat* it as the only relief he can give to a being he has almost destroyed. . . . What interpretation can be put on his refusal? If he says he will not take the oath, it is *cruel*, and if he add that he cannot, what is to become of me? Is it in nature possible for me to return to an uncertain home, with all the horrors I have suffered there fresh on my mind, with the constant dread of what may be hurrying over me? I really think (under those circumstances) that when my presence would be absolutely necessary, that [*sic*] it would not remain *in my own power* to be able to encounter such misery. It is not, believe me, the feelings of *pride*, *avarice*, or the absence of *those comforts* I have all my life been accustomed to, that is killing me by inches; it is the loss of my only remaining comfort, *the hope I used to live on from time to time of seeing my children.* The above assertion I can convince the world of, if driven to it, by leaving the bond (all I have) to the creditors, and the Duke's generous allowance, to the decision of the law.

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* The passage omitted by Barton when he made this letter public evidently referred to March.

"It is now, and ever has been, my wish to save [Mr. March]; for, even now, I feel a regard for him I cannot conquer; but surely I may expect some return of gratitude from a man who, by a single act, could relieve those fears that are nearly *insupportable.* The idea is shocking.

"Excuse this long letter; but I am sure you will see and feel the motives and the urgency. Once more, dear sir, forgive and excuse

"Yours,
"DORA JORDAN."

After reading this letter it is well to turn to March's two concluding paragraphs,* which are his answer to it. Particularly should be noted the sentences: "There can be no question that the mind of this great woman had been long and grievously oppressed—nor will this be any matter of wonder when a retrospect is taken of her eventful life. . . . Can there be a severer censure on her memory than to think that pecuniary difficulties, even weighty (which hers never were), could for any length of time have depressed a mind such as hers, in its perfect state?" In fact, Mrs. Jordan was not in her right mind when she wrote to Barton. We may agree with March on that point, only adding the detail that it was his conduct—airily glossed over by him in the phrase, "pecuniary difficulties"—which drove her out of her mind.

When Miss Sketchley paid her visit to London she informed Mrs. March and Mrs. Alsop that Mrs. Jordan's future residence was to be kept secret from them and that all letters to her must be addressed to "Mrs. James" and sent through a third person. March makes this the excuse for Mrs. Jordan never receiving from him the oath which she so urgently desired. "The fatal step of cutting off the source of communication," he protests, "prevented altogether, or perhaps only delayed, the receipt of a letter written . . . on the very same day [? as Mrs. Jordan's letter to Barton], to say that he was truly willing to do whatever Mrs. Jordan should herself require and that the oath should be taken whenever she wrote to say it was her wish."

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* See pp. 346-7.

Are we to believe that March was lying when he says that he wrote such a letter; or that the third person, whose name was given by Miss Sketchley to the Marches and Mrs. Alsop but is unknown to us, was so monstrously cruel as to suppress, or delay until too late, this letter which would have saved Mrs. Jordan's life or at least made her death less terrible? We cannot bring ourselves to accept the latter alternative in order to uphold the good faith of a man like March.

Barrington did not see the temporary apartments which Mrs. Jordan took at Versailles, but he visited those at St. Cloud twice after her death and portrays them vividly. It was certainly very unfortunate that, though he was residing not a mile away from her, in a large hotel near the Bois de Boulogne, he never met her in 1816. It was not his fault; for she never went out of doors and did not live under her own name.

"The apartments at St. Cloud," says Barrington, "were in a house in the square adjoining the palace. This house was large, gloomy, cold, and inconvenient; just the sort of place which would tell in description in a romance. . . . I could not, I am sure, wander over it at night without a superstitious feeling. The rooms were numerous, but small; the furniture scanty, old, and tattered. The hotel had obviously once belonged to some nobleman, and a long, lofty, flagged gallery stretched from one wing of it to the other. Mrs. Jordan's chambers were shabby: no English comforts solaced her in her latter moments. In her little drawing-room a small old sofa was the best-looking piece of furniture: on this she constantly reclined, and on it she expired." The garden was overgrown with weeds and had in it two melancholy cypresses.

"The surrounding prospect is undoubtedly very fine," Barrington adds; "but I would not, even if I were made a present of that mansion, consent to reside in it *one month*."

The landlord of Mrs. Jordan's St. Cloud apartments appears in Barrington's narrative as Mr. C***†. To him his tenant clearly was rather a mystery. She appeared very poor, but wore a magnificent diamond ring—it cost her four hundred guineas, according to Barrington—and had many valuable trinkets. From the time of her arrival she showed restless anxiety for letters from England, every post increasing her solicitude. As time went on she grew still more miserable, her skin became discoloured, and she lay sighing on her sofa from morning to night.

The discolouration of the skin, it appears, was occasioned by jaundice, with which owing to her unhealthy manner of life she had become afflicted. Boaden well remarks that, while "everything should have been cheerful around her, on the contrary her very habitation at St. Cloud was a disease." The growth of the malady, however, troubled her little in comparison with her general misery, and Barrington was told by Mr. C*** that at length she seemed actually to regard the approach of dissolution with a kind of placid welcome.

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† Boaden is puzzled over this suppression of the name by Barrington and says, "I asked it myself in *another* quarter, and an answer was cautiously *declined*."

One is bound to draw largely upon Barrington's narrative for the account of Mrs. Jordan's last days, for the reason that there is little else upon which to draw. All that Boaden can add of information seems to have come through the Hawkers, and that we shall see to be scanty. The author of the *Public and Private Life*, however, took considerable pains to collect independent evidence, and certainly succeeded in getting some, whatever its true value may be. In the first place, there is a curious story which purports to be first-hand. According to this, a former confectioner to King George III. who had set up in business in Paris, discovering (it is not explained how) that Mrs. Jordan was at St. Cloud, attempted to call upon her, but found to his astonishment that she was "subjected to a positive state of *espionage*." His requests to be allowed to see her met with evasive answers, and at last he retired. Soon after a letter reached him from her, entreating him to be under one of the windows of her house after midnight. He came, had two hours' conversation with her, learned that she was in complete captivity, environed by spies, and reduced to indigence. She accepted twenty francs, all he had in his pocket, and made an appointment with him for the following day, when he was to lend her £20 to enable her to escape to England. At the second appointment he brought the promised loan and arranged to meet her once more in ten days' time, when he would escort her in her flight from France. He came to Saint-Cloud on the date fixed, only to be told that she had died the day before.

This confectioner was named Greatorex. Now the *Public and Private Life* puts forward also, with an assertion that the strict veracity of the details can be avouched, a "Narrative of the Last Days, Death, and Funeral of Mrs. Jordan, by a Gentleman still living in Paris, who attended the Funeral, etc., etc." In the course of this we find the following statement:

"At the time of Mrs. Jordan's retirement one Mr. John Greatorex kept a highly respectable hotel in the Rue Pelletier, Paris, who was in the habit of supplying many English families with wine, spirits, and other commodities. He was in the frequent practice of repairing to Saint-Cloud, being one of the few individuals who was aware that the supposed Mrs. James was no other than the once highly-favoured and celebrated Mrs. Jordan.*

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* The *Public and Private Life* is amusingly pompous in its description of Mrs. Jordan's early acquaintance with Greatorex:

"In the days of her prosperity and when basking in the sunshine of princely protection, the subject of our memoir had been in the habit of visiting with her infant offspring the residence of a confectioner to his late Majesty George III., where she used to meet former acquaintances whom she could not with propriety tolerate in the Stable Yard, St. James's. On such occasions the party to whom we refer used to gambol with the thriving progeny of the princely father and, as may be supposed, the choicest of sweetmeats used to be spread to regale them; in short, during such visits (and we are not exactly certain that the royal parent himself was not in some instances present) all reserve was laid aside, and our actress enjoyed that unrestrained intercourse which was so consonant with the unsophisticated effusions of her heart."

She uniformly received Mr. Greatorex with all that amiability of manner and unaffected condescension that were universally allowed to be peculiarly her own; the last visit he paid having been only two days previous to her decease. On the occasion alluded to she ordered refreshments to be brought, whereof he partook—observing at the time that she was labouring under bodily indisposition, though she certainly did not appear on the eve of dissolution. After the lapse of two days, on Mr. Greatorex again presenting himself to enquire after the state of Mrs. Jordan's health, he found she had ceased to be an inhabitant of this world. . . ."

There is a great discrepancy between these stories, it will be observed; so great that one or other must be untrue, though Greatorex must be the ultimate authority for both. From the *Public and Private Life* we learn that a few years after Mrs. Jordan's death, returning to England, he made application, "in a certain quarter," for repayment of the twenty pounds which he had lent. He was asked to show a receipt, but had none, though he possessed letters asking for the loan. In 1831 the author of the *Public and Private Life* saw Greatorex, who "produced a bundle of documents, which he stated his determination to make public," and added that, when he applied for his money, "he saw two or three individuals enjoying posts in a great establishment whom he recollected as having held the situation of spies or keepers over Mrs. Jordan."

It seems clear that, disappointed of getting back his twenty pounds by fair means, Greatorex turned blackmailer. Very likely he then supplied the tale of his secret visits to St. Cloud and converted Miss Sketchley into a ring of spies.* The other story, in the "Narrative of the Last Days," etc., may have been his original statement. It does not conflict with what Barrington learned at St. Cloud, except that the latter says Mrs. Jordan lived there "*totally* secluded," which seems to have been an exaggeration.

We may now return to Mr. C***'s account of his tenant's last days. Every letter she received appeared to have a different effect upon her feelings; but at length an interval of some posts occurred without a letter. Her anxiety then seemed beyond her strength. "On the morning of her death this impatient feeling reached its crisis. The agitation was almost fearful. Her eyes were now restless, now fixed; her motions rapid and unmeaning; and her whole manner seemed to bespeak the attack of some convulsive paroxysm. She eagerly requested Mr. C***, *before* the usual hour of delivery, to go for her letters to the post. On his return, she started up and held out her hand as if impatient to receive them. He told her *there were*

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* We have no reason for supposing Miss Sketchley to have been other than a faithful attendant, if a poor nurse for a dying woman. We read in the "Narrative of the Last Days," etc., that to her "several peers and peeresses of the present day stand indebted for the peculiar interest she took in the superintendence of their comforts and happiness during the period of their juvenile days." These peers and peeresses being the Fitzclarences, it was natural that Miss Sketchley should not look on Mrs. Alsop and the Marches with a favourable eye.

none. She stood a moment motionless; looked towards him with a vacant stare; held out her hand again, as if by an involuntary action; instantly withdrew it and sank back upon the sofa from which she had arisen. He left the room to send up her attendant, who however had gone out, and Mr. C*** returned himself to Mrs. Jordan. On his return he observed some change in her looks that alarmed him. She spoke not a word, but gazed at him steadfastly: her face was one moment flushed and another livid: she sighed deeply, and her heart seemed bursting. Mr. C*** stood uncertain what to do: but in a moment he heard her breath drawn more hardly, and as it were sobbingly. He was now thoroughly terrified: he hastily approached the sofa, and leaning over the unfortunate lady discovered that those deep-drawn sobs had immediately preceded the moment of Mrs. Jordan's dissolution. She was already no more!"

It requires no environment by spies, such as Greatorex in his wrathful disappointment conjured up, to render terrible this end of the brilliant popular favourite and prince's mistress. It may be said, perhaps, that such is popular and princely gratitude that an ill end is only what should be anticipated by favourite and mistress.* But there were circumstances in Mrs. Jordan's case which make it more than usually distressing to contemplate. The bodily sickness was the least of her tortures. The mere fact of her poverty (however explained) counted for little. It was the mind on the rack, and strained beyond endurance, that calls for all our pity. If it gave way before her death—if it was no longer, as March says, "in its perfect state"—the mania which possessed it was not of the merciful kind which is held to wipe out pain; it was rather the concentration of all the faculties into one capacity for feeling pain.

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* Mrs. Jordan's old manager, John Kemble, expressed himself very strongly on one occasion with regard to the value of popular favour. When Lord Mountjoy tried to console him for the burning down of Covent Garden, in the autumn of 1808, with the reflection that the public would make it up to him, he exclaimed: "The gratitude of the world and the people! My Lord, Christ was *crucified*—De Witt was *assassinated!* So much for the world and the people!"

Mrs. Jordan herself, in the letter which we have just seen, reveals the fundamental reason for her agony. What was "killing her by inches" was "the loss of the hope she used to live on of seeing her children." She left England in September, 1815. When she died she had been separated for ten months from every one of her children, and she died at a moment when the prospect of seeing any of them appeared as remote as ever. The cruelty of all connected with her lies in this, that they must all have known the root of her anguish, and yet not one seems to have taken any step to relieve her. Perhaps we may make an exception in favour of the Hawkers. Boaden says that at the time when the first (premature) news of her mother's death reached Lucy Hawker not a month had elapsed since her *accouchement*, and that on its contradiction she prepared at once to set out for Paris; but before she could start, Mrs. Jordan was really dead.

The author of the *Public and Private Life* is very indignant with the young Fitzclarences for not hastening to their mother, "spurning with indignation the *paternal command*." He bids them scornfully

"Go and adorn yourselves in the tinsel gewgaws of fashion—go and indulge your pampered appetites at the ample board, and wallow on the couch of luxury—we envy not your glittering guise, we covet not your splendid banquetings or seek to share your down beds of voluptuousness. Poverty with a light heart and approving conscience is to us more acceptable than splendour purchased at such a price!"

In justice to the Fitzclarence children it must be said that there is no reason to think that they knew of their mother's condition, and that, apart from the two sons in India, only Sophia was of an age to travel to France to visit her during her last days. The whole burden of unkindness must be shifted from them, at least, on to their father's shoulders. For him there is nothing to be said that is not said by his factotum, Barton, who puts into many words the statement that Mrs. Jordan was the Duke's pensioned-off mistress. As her pension was regularly paid, according to him, what more could be asked of his illustrious master? The trifling remark in the woman's letter to himself on January 18th, about her death by inches through the loss of her children, naturally called for no comment from a gentleman of his business and worldly experience.

In connection with Mrs. Jordan's death Boaden tells a very curious story about himself, which would have been very much increased in value if only he had taken the trouble to record the time of the occurrence. But unluckily, if Boaden was by no means superstitious, neither was he accurate or scientific. He makes no nearer approach to a date than by saying that "about the period in question there was a notion that, so far from her being dead, Mrs. Jordan had been seen by various persons in London"; nor does he instance any other persons than Mrs. Alsop and himself. The former, he learned long after, had to her entire conviction met her mother in the Strand after the (? first) report of her death, "which threw her into *fits* at the time."

His own vision was very precise. "The dear lady was not an every-day sort of woman," he explains. "Not that there were not some persons who resembled her; for some such I knew who had more than a slight resemblance in features and who, to enhance their own attractions, copied her smile and a peculiar action of the mouth which was full of effect and pointed an ironical sentence. But there is a physiognomy so minute, if we will observe, as to decide the almost indifferent actions of the human character. She was near-sighted and wore a glass attached to a gold chain around her neck; her manner of using this to assist her sight was extremely peculiar."

One day he was taking a very usual walk before dinner, he narrates, and was looking into a bookseller's window on the left side of Piccadilly. A lady stopped beside him with a similar impulse. He was convinced it was Mrs. Jordan, but as she dropped a long white veil over her face at once he concluded that she did not wish to be recognised and said nothing. He went home and mentioned the occurrence to his family at the dinner-table, quoting from *Macbeth*, "If I stand here I saw her!"

From an engraving by J. Heath.

MRS. JORDAN.

[*Facing p.* 322.

CHAPTER XXII

THE LAST INDIGNITIES

IN the account of Mrs. Jordan's death given to Barrington by " Mr. C*** " there is no mention of any false alarm previously. That there was such, however, we learn from the London newspapers of the time as well as from Boaden. A Sunday journal on June 30th " regrets to state that the celebrated and favourite representative of the comic muse, Mrs. Jordan, died at St. Cloud on Monday morning last. She had been seized with an inflammation of the lungs, which in all probability would have proved ultimately fatal; but the more immediate cause of her death was the rupture of a blood-vessel in a fit of coughing."

On the following day one of the evening papers stated that hopes were entertained that Mrs. Jordan was still alive. "The letter which announced her death last week was received on Thursday. Letters of a subsequent date received in town yesterday from a lady who accompanies Mrs. Jordan states that her life had been despaired of, but that severe blisters had been applied, and hopes were entertained of her recovery. None of her family have received any account of her death."[*]

On the 4th the *Times* announced that a letter had been received from the lady who resided with Mrs. Jordan stating that she was alive on the previous Friday morning, but that "a very few hours would probably terminate her existence." Then on the 10th the same journal said: "The Paris papers received yesterday mention the death of Mrs. Jordan. She lingered in a state of insensibility until Friday last [July 5th], when she expired at two o'clock in the morning. . . ."

Boaden's account of the letters received by one of Mrs. Jordan's daughters—obviously Lucy Hawker—agrees well enough with the newspaper story. Towards the latter end of June came an announcement from Miss Sketchley that, after a few days' illness, Mrs. Jordan was dead. Three days later Miss Sketchley wrote again that she had been deceived by Mrs. Jordan's appearance; she was alive, but very ill. Before Mrs. Hawker could start for France, however, a third letter brought the information that "Mrs. Jordan was really dead." Thereupon General Hawker himself went over to Paris and arrived, Boaden believes, three days after the interment.[†]

[*] Both these paragraphs are reproduced in the *Times*, on July 1st and 2nd respectively.

[†] Boaden thinks that Mr. C***'s description to Barrington refers to the first, mistaken appearance of death; but this surely is most improbable. It is curious, in any case, that he did not mention the false alarm. It would be much more curious if he told Barrington of the supposed death on June 24th and omitted to state that Mrs. Jordan lingered on, nevertheless, until July 5th. Of course it is possible to dismiss Mr. C***'s story as a picturesque invention; but Barrington was impressed by its sincerity.

It seems probable that Mrs. Jordan was buried on the very same day that she died. The "Narrative of the Last Days," etc., from which we have quoted in the preceding chapter, has an account of the funeral, of which there is no reason to doubt the accuracy. If most of the newspaper reports differ from it, so also do they differ among themselves.* We have seen that according to the "Narrative," Greatorex, calling at the St. Cloud house to inquire how Mrs. Jordan was, found she was dead. His arrival at the moment was most opportune; for, "in conformity with the revolting custom pursued in France," preparations for the funeral had already commenced, and the body, as that of an actress, would have been denied even Christian burial. Miss Sketchley, in the midst of strangers, did not know what to do. Greatorex, however, hastened back to Paris and, finding the British Embassy chaplain Foster unwell, procured the assistance of the Rev. Mr. Marron, officiating pastor at the French Protestant Church of the Oratoire. Eight English residents in Paris were also collected and all repaired to Saint-Cloud, where the funeral took place in the presence of the mayor of the town, in his official robes. The service was conducted by Marron with every appropriate solemnity. "The ceremony, although plain, was in every respect decorous, the coffin being covered with light blue cloth, lined and embellished with white furniture. After the office had been performed a cold collation, consisting of fruits and different wines, was prepared by order of Miss Sketchley for the pastor and gentlemen who had officiated."

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* The brief account of the funeral in the *Times* of July 15th says that "Mrs. Jordan was buried in a thin shell, stained black, but uncovered with cloth or ornament of any kind. Mr. Thomas Greatorex, an hotel-keeper in Paris, and Mr. Wm. Henshall, statuary, Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square, were by accident passing, and saw her interred. They were the only Englishmen present." William Henry Ireland claims that he attended Mrs. Jordan's funeral (Preface to *Vortigern*, 1832).

If we believe this "Narrative" to be true, then, thanks to the intervention of Greatorex, the funeral of the benefactress of so many people during her lifetime was not so absolutely squalid as it had threatened to be. But those most closely connected with Mrs. Jordan seemed determined to put themselves wrong in the eyes of the world. They could make the excuse—a poor one, it is true, seeing how long her illness was known—that her death and burial took them by surprise. But what is to be made of the fact that for three years the debt of sixty francs due to the municipality of Saint-Cloud for her grave remained unpaid? *Galignani's Messenger*, recording its dischage at last by a British resident in Paris, had some very pertinent comments. The writer, having mentioned that he had resided some years ago in the neighbourhood of Bushey Park, alludes to the grand dinner there in honour of the Duke of Clarence's birthday in 1806, when Mrs. Jordan took the head of the table, supported by Princes, and her children, "even to a white-headed infant in the nurse's arms," were brought in and introduced to the company. "About the same time of the year, ten years after, Mrs. Jordan dies at Saint-Cloud, near Paris, in a state of *poverty* and *obscurity*, and is buried in a *deal coffin painted black*, her funeral being conducted and attended by strangers; and now in 1819 we learn that an appeal to the public is necessary, to pay a part of the expense, sixty francs—*two pounds, twelve shillings and sixpence*. That numbers of Englishmen should be eager to discharge that, for the honour of their country, which other people have so grossly neglected, to the dishonour of themselves, is not to be wondered at, particularly when . . . the peculiar generosity and benevolence of Mrs. Jordan's character are understood, as also that she did not become poor by folly or extravagance; and that lastly, if *unconnected*, she might have died mistress of a very respectable fortune. Taking all these circumstances into consideration, the Paris advertisement [of the debt for Mrs. Jordan's grave] forms one of the severest libels upon many persons in high life, to whom her talents were once rendered convenient, that ever was furnished."

Mrs. Jordan's grave, having been paid for at last, remained undecorated by any memorial for a long time.* Eventually Henry Woodgate, Esq., of Dedham, Essex, provided one. We do not know his connection with Mrs. Jordan, but the *Public*

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* Barrington in 1827 believed he might still say, "Not a stone tells where she lies!" He mentions a proposal a few years previously on the part of some English friends in Paris to remove Mrs. Jordan's body to Père la Chaise and place a marble over her grave; adding, "But some (I think rather mistaken) ideas of delicacy at that time suspended its execution."

Genest says of the grave: "That part of the churchyard of St. Cloud where she was buried was very low, and as it was intended some time or other to level it, a mound to the height of six feet was raised over her grave. She was buried under an acacia tree, and at the proper time of the *and Private Life* says that he, "accompanied by his lady, was with Mrs. Jordan a short period prior to her dissolution." He had put over the grave a flat stone, a little raised, bearing the following inscription:

Memoriæ Sacrum
DOROTHEÆ JORDAN
Quæ per multos annos Londini
Inque aliis Britanniæ urbibus
Scenam egregie ornavit.
Lepore comico vocis suavitate
Puellarum hilarium alteriusque sexus
Moribus habitu imitandis nulli secunda.
Ad exercendam eam
Qua tam feliciter versata est artem
Ut res egenorum adversas sublevaret
Nemo promptior.
E vita exiit 3^{tio} Nonas Julii, 1816.
Annos nata 50.
Mementote Lugete.*

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year, cypress-trees were planted round the mound. This was executed with taste, but it was afterwards suffered to go to ruin for the want of a small sum of money."

[Since the above was written I have come across a press-cutting in Anderdon's *Collectanea Biographica*, which, if correctly dated, shows that the tombstone was already in position in February, 1818. But the sketch of the tomb by "S. Bennett, comedian," in the same work, is dated May 4th, 1828.]

* Genest says that he and a friend composed this epitaph at the request of "an English gentleman at Paris, who was intimate with her and with myself."

It is to be noted that the epitaph makes Mrs. Jordan only fifty at the time of her death; and that the Latin date has led some people into error as to the day on which she died—the "third day before the Nones of July," being July 5th, not 3rd.

In Tom Moore's *Memoirs* there are, under the date March 1st, 1836, some notes which he made after a conversation with Chantrey, the sculptor, to the following effect: "Told me of a group he had just executed for the King of Mrs. Jordan and some of her children, and described the strong feelings which the King evinced when he first proposed the task to him, saying that it had been for many years his intention to have such a memorial executed as soon as he should be in a situation to afford it."

This was King William's reparation to Mrs. Jordan, twenty years after her death, for his treatment of her while she yet lived. Truly a monumental example of repentance! Where the King intended to set up the group is not known. After his death next year it was taken down to the Rev. Lord Augustus Fitzclarence's rectory at Mapledurham and forgotten.

But we must return to the time immediately following Mrs. Jordan's death and see what happened with regard to her estate. Sir Jonah Barrington, writing of the appearance of poverty which both Mme. Ducamp and her servant noted in the English visitor at Marquetra, asserts that Mrs. Jordan "might have commanded, during the whole period of her continental residence, any sums she thought proper. She had money in the bank, in the funds, and in miscellaneous property, and had just before received several thousands." But she "took up a whim to affect poverty—thus deceiving the world and giving, herself, a vantage ground to the gossiping and censorious."

It is extraordinary that Barrington could write thus, however great his anxiety to shield his patron, the Duke of Clarence. He could not himself have been ignorant of certain facts, nor could he surely imagine that the public was ignorant of them or had in 1827, when he published his memoirs, entirely forgotten them. On Mrs. Jordan's death her personal effects at St. Cloud were sealed up by the police. Some time after they were put to auction, and even her body-linen was sold—"amidst the coarse remarks of low Frenchwomen," says Genest, who got his information from someone present at the sale. So much for her belongings in France. With regard to those in England, the law also stepped in. She had left no will, and on May 24th, 1817, letters of administration were taken out at Doctors' Commons by the solicitor to the Treasury, when her property was sworn to be under three hundred pounds!

Where then was the money "in the bank, in the funds, and in miscellaneous property"? Let it be granted that the Marches had received some of the money drawn from Coutts's in January—though March says that the securities which Mrs. Jordan was called upon to pay only amounted to £2,000 and that "never during her lifetime was one shilling paid." What had become of all the rest of the money earned by Mrs. Jordan (apart from what we know her to have given away) and of "the Duke's generous allowance," as she calls it? After ten months of penurious life in France, all that she left to show for it was under three hundred pounds.

Can it then be wondered that, in spite of the positive statement of Barton, in spite of the firm belief of Barrington, Boaden, and many others that the settlement made in 1811 was a genuine affair, people were found to question it both before and after William came to the throne? As we have said, without proof of the drafts upon the bank and without Mrs. Jordan's receipt for the repayment of the loans which she had made we lack very essential evidence. We are not justified in assuming from their non-appearance that they never existed. On the other hand, we cannot accept Barton's uncorroborated word. To adopt the latter course would be to dismiss the mystery of Mrs. Jordan's fortune as entirely beyond explanation.

After the taking out of letters of administration in May, 1817, no attempt was made by Mrs. Jordan's relatives to protect her memory from the reproach of an insolvent death. It is possible that the relatives thought it less necessary to do this than to buy off a blackmailer. It is, at any rate, curious that at the beginning of June an advertisement appeared of a work of which no more is heard:

"Thirteenth of June, 1817, will be published in one vol. octavo, with original letters, Authentic Memoirs of Mrs. Jordan. This favourite retired to the continent, where she closed an existence insupportable to her feelings as a mother. By Colburn, Conduit Street, Bond Street."

The Treasury Solicitor proceeded slowly with his task of administering Mrs. Jordan's estate, and it was not until December, 8th, 1823, that an announcement was inserted in various newspapers to the following effect:

Dorothea Jordan, deceased.—The creditors of Dorothea Jordan, late of Englefield Green, and Cadogan Place, Sloane Street, in the County of Middlesex, spinster, deceased, who have proved their debts, may receive a dividend of five shillings in the pound, by applying at the office of the Solicitor to the Treasury, No. 5, Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn. And those creditors who have not yet proved their debts are requested forthwith to furnish the Solicitor of the Treasury with proofs thereof."

The immediate consequence of this advertisement was a fierce Press attack upon the Duke of Clarence. One specimen may suffice, taken from an evening paper of the day:*

"To those who have witnessed the honourable and liberal feelings of this benevolent woman in pecuniary matters—the generosity of self-denial with which she permitted her theatrical salary to be taken weekly and devoted to expenses of a domestic nature, which expenses in any similar case would have been defrayed from other funds—it must prove a source of much pain to see her name held up to the world as that of an insolvent who had lived beyond her income and defrauded the honest tradesman of his just due. There are nearer connections to whom such a fact ought to be unbearable."

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* Quoted in *The Drama or Theatrical Magazine*, 1824.

Other critics made great play with the assertion that the Duke was suffering a "composition" of his mistress's debts. This stirred up an indignant protest from an adherent, who, without consulting the Duke, on January 4th, 1824, published a denial of the correctness of the term composition. "Mrs. Jordan died intestate in France, the consequence of which is her property vests in the Crown, and it has become the duty of the King's solicitor to collect her effects and apply them in the first instance to the payment of her debts. He has done this and announced a payment to the extent stated. This is the fact, but it is not a *composition* of the lady's debts; the same course would be adopted in the case of any other British subject dying abroad intestate." It would not perhaps have been necessary to notice the misrepresentation, the writer continues, had it not been made the ground of "a bitter invective against a royal personage formerly connected with that interesting female by many dear and intimate ties." So far from Mrs. Jordan having been left to pine and die in want in a foreign land, she had enjoyed a regular income of £2,000 a year, settled on her by the Royal Duke. The last quarter, which did not become due until after her death, had been drawn by her companion in France, who came over to London for the purpose. In conclusion, the misrepresentation might have been allowed to pass uncontradicted because unnoticed by friends of the royal personage; but its exposure is "due to the cause of truth, it is due to the country, which has an interest in the character of the illustrious individual so near to the throne, which could not belong to the case of a subject, however important, of inferior rank."

This vindication of the Duke of Clarence was not considered sufficient, and now at length Mr. Barton of the Royal Mint entered the fray with a long statement in the form of a letter to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE STATEMENTS OF BARTON AND MARCH

FROM the two statements reproduced in this chapter numerous quotations have already been made above, and it is unnecessary, therefore, for those readers whose interest lies only in the romance of Mrs. Jordan's life to devote attention to them. They are, however, the two last original documents in the *dossier* of the great controversy concerning Mrs. Jordan's end; and, as they are not to be found in any readily accessible works, it has seemed advisable to add them here. On Barton's statement no further comment is required than has already been made. March's is accompanied by a few notes for which it appears to call.

I. *Barton's Statement*

(From the *Morning Chronicle* of January 26th, 1824).

"The Late Mrs. Jordan.

"Sir,

"The attention of the public has lately, as it has many times before, been drawn by notices in the daily papers to the case of the late Mrs. Jordan, and much pains have been taken to stigmatize the conduct of an illustrious personage as it relates to that celebrated and much esteemed favourite of the public. These censures upon the conduct of the Duke of Clarence have been often repeated and as often treated with silence upon the part of His Royal Highness's friends. This silence has, however, been construed by many into an admission of the accusations; till at length the stories so often told of Mrs. Jordan's having been obliged to leave her country and fly to a neighbouring kingdom, where it is said she died insolvent, for want of a trifling allowance being made to her by the Duke, are assumed as facts.

"It has gone on thus until some persons have exclaimed, 'Has the Duke of Clarence no friend who, if the accusations are groundless, can rescue the character of His Royal Highness from such gross calumny?' All who know the Duke or his connections intimately are acquainted with the truth; but, none being so fully possessed of the whole case as myself, I feel that any further forbearance would amount to a dereliction of duty on my part, and therefore, in justice to a much-injured character, I take upon myself to submit the following statement to the public, acquainting them, in the first place, that it was through my hands the whole transaction upon the separation of the Duke and Mrs. Jordan passed; that it was at my suggestion Mrs. Jordan adopted the resolution of leaving this country for France, to enable her the more readily and honourably to extricate herself from the troubles into which she had fallen through a misplaced confidence; and that I possess a correspondence with Mrs. Jordan, subsequent to her leaving England, which corroborates my statement in the minutest points. Upon the separation which took place between Mrs. Jordan and the Duke in the year 1811, it was agreed that she should have the care, until a certain age, of her four youngest daughters, and a settlement was made by the Duke for the payment by him of the following amounts:

"For the maintenance of his four daughters - - - - -	£1,500
"For a house and carriage for their use - - - - - - - -	600
"For Mrs. Jordan's own use - - - - - - - - - - - -	1,500
"And to enable Mrs. Jordan to make a provision for her married daughters, children of a former connection - - -	800
"In all	£4,400

"This settlement was carried into effect, a trustee was appointed, and the monies under such trust were paid *quarterly* to the respective accounts at the banking house of Messrs. Coutts and Co. It was a stipulation in the said settlements that, in the event of Mrs. Jordan resuming her profession, the care of the Duke's four daughters, together with the £1,500 per annum for their maintenance, should revert to His Royal Highness; and this event actually did take place, in the course of a few months, in consequence of Mrs. Jordan's desire to accept certain proposals made to her to perform.

Mrs. Jordan did resume her profession; and, not long after, reflections were thrown out against both the Duke and herself; whereupon Mrs. Jordan, indignant at such an attack upon His Royal Highness, wrote the following letter, which was published in the papers of the day:

[Here follows the letter reproduced on pp. 281-2 above.]

"It should have been before stated that, upon settling the annual allowance to Mrs. Jordan, everything in the shape of a money transaction was brought to account; and that even the most trifling sums, upon recollection, were admitted; and, interest being calculated upon the whole in her favour to the latest period, the balance was paid over by me, on the part of the Duke, and for which I hold Mrs. Jordan's receipt. It should also be understood that, up to the day of their separation, Mrs. Jordan had received a large annual allowance from His Royal Highness.

"A cessation of correspondence between Mrs. Jordan and myself ensued until September, 1815, when I most unexpectedly received a note from her, requesting to see me immediately. I found her in tears, and under much embarrassment from a circumstance that had burst upon her, as she said, 'like a thunder-storm.' She found herself involved to a considerable amount by securities which all at once appeared against her, in the form of bonds and promissory notes, given incautiously by herself to relieve, as she thought, from trifling difficulties *a near relation, in whom she had placed the greatest confidence.*

"Acceptances had been given by her in *blank*, upon stamped paper, which she supposed were for small amounts, but which afterwards appear to have been laid before her capable of carrying larger sums.

"She was fearful of immediate arrest. She wished to treat all her claimants most fairly and honourably, and to save, if possible, the wife and children of the person who had so deceived her from utter ruin. She could not enter into negotiations with her creditors unless at large; and, apprehending that, if she remained in England, that would not long be the case, she instantly adopted the resolution before-mentioned of going to France.

"A list of creditors was made out, and an arrangement was in progress to enable her to return to this country. All she required, in order to set her mind at ease on the extent of the demands that might be out against her, was that the person who had plunged her into all these difficulties should declare, upon oath, that the list he had given to her included the whole. This the party from time to time refused to do; and, disappointed thus in the hope she had so fondly cherished of again returning to this country and seeing those children for whom she had the most tender affection, she sunk under the weight of her afflictions, and in the month of June [*sic*], 1816, died at St. Cloud.

"In support of the foregoing narrative the writer has the most incontestible evidence; but he trusts nothing can be more satisfactory or convincing to the public than the following extract from a letter addressed by Mrs. Jordan to him, dated at Paris, 18th January, 1816:

[Here follows the letter reproduced on pp. 309-10 above.]

"With the death of Mrs. Jordan ceased the allowance which, by His Royal Highness's means, she was enabled to make up £200 a year, to each of her three married daughters. Surely then no blame can attach to the Duke of Clarence, whose liberality, in order to enable Mrs. Jordan to make a suitable provision for them in the event of her death, has been acknowledged by her to have been 'most noble and generous in the highest degree.'

"All sorts of means were resorted to by one of the parties (now no more) to compel a continuance of these allowances. The Duke did not choose to be driven in this respect, but when the importunity, from inefficacy of threats, had died away, His Royal Highness, of his own generous accord, did give to each his kind assistance, and I am to this day paying, and as long as it shall be His Royal Highness's pleasure shall continue to pay, annual gratuities to the two surviving daughters.

"Who then, after this statement of *facts*, shall accuse the Duke of Clarence with want of generosity towards Mrs. Jordan or her memory?

"The administration of the effects of Mrs. Jordan by the Solicitor of the Treasury was *ex-officio*, and the advertisement which appeared in the papers, and which has called forth this last attack, was put in regular discharge of the duties of his administration.

"I must conclude with one assurance, that, after having given a true and, I trust, candid recital of facts, I shall treat with contempt anything further that may be said on this subject; resting satisfied if, after an attachment of six-and-thirty years' service to a good and generous master, I shall have added anything to his comfort in convincing a single individual of the injustice he has sustained.

"I am, Sir, &c., &c.,
"JOHN BARTON.

"Royal Mint, Jan. 21, 1824."

II. March's Statement.

Boaden, commenting on Sir Jonah Barrington's account of Mrs. Jordan's wretched end, notes that, while he refrained from throwing the blame for it upon anyone by name, he most distinctly "pointed out the offender whom he accuses of betraying confidence, forfeiting his honour, and repaying benevolence with ruin." Boaden himself suppresses the name, while showing plainly that March is meant. "The gentleman thus shadowed out" was unknown to him personally, but "he once made a statement of that miserable story which Sir Jonah's pen would not tell and submitted it to a liberal and enlightened friend, in whose opinion he wished to stand clear at least of everything but his misfortunes." This Authentic Statement (as Boaden calls it) is as follows:

"In the autumn of 1815, Mrs. Jordan was called upon, very unexpectedly, to redeem some securities given by her for money raised to assist a near relative. The cause of this aid was the pressure of matters purely of a domestic nature. The call upon her was sudden and certainly unexpected; and, not finding herself in a position to advance the £2,000 claimed, she withdrew herself to France, deputing a friend in England to make every necessary arrangement for paying all the creditors as soon as possible. At the time of Mrs. Jordan's quitting England she was in receipt of an annual income of upwards of £2,000—paid with the greatest punctuality quarterly, without demur, drawback, or impediment; and so continued to the hour of her death. Up to April, 1816, Mrs. Jordan's drafts on Messrs. Coutts and Co. were duly paid. Never for a moment could she have felt the griping hand of poverty.

"I can positively assert that never during her lifetime was one shilling paid towards liquidating the securities in question; nor was it urgent that it should be done; because the creditors, for the most part personal friends,* well knew the upright principles they had to depend on; nor were they ignorant that the transcendent talents of this gifted being were always sure to receive a munificent reward from the hands of the public, whenever she should again seek their assistance. And in the fruits of this they were sure of participating. Her protracted stay abroad was occasioned by untoward circumstances, over which the principals had no control.

"Up to the hour of Mrs. Jordan's leaving England, she had been living under the same roof with the relative with whom she was concerned in the securities alluded to. Reciprocal acts of kindness, mutual confidence in all domestic matters, and many points of private affairs tended to create in Mrs. Jordan's mind a reliance upon this person. Never for a moment during the six years that her daughter had been married had Mrs. Jordan reason to doubt his sincere affection or his veracity; nor did she doubt them when she left England.

"Immediately upon the derangement of Mrs. Jordan's affairs, and before she left England, a statement of all the claims to which she was liable was made out, together with a list of the persons holding her bonds and bills of acceptance; the result of which convinced Mrs. Jordan that her liabilities did not much exceed £2,000, and that the claimants were, one and all, the personal friends of the parties.*

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* Compare with this Mrs. Jordan's words above (p. 309): "I can solemnly declare that the names I send to you are the only ones I know of, and the greatest part utter strangers to me."

"In August,† 1815, Mrs. Jordan left England for France with the intention of remaining away some ten days, the time computed necessary to place matters in that state as to render her person legally secure from arrest. Her affairs were placed in the hands of persons well informed in every particular thereof, as of all other matters connected with her life. Mrs. Jordan was well aware that the creditors were only anxious to have their claims placed in a secure state and that they were willing to give every accommodation required. She was also aware that her fellow-sufferer had given up a considerable portion of his annual income‡; and she felt that her representative in England could in one hour's time settle any doubtful point that might arise during the arrangement. Consequently, when she found that month after month elapsed without anything being finally settled, her mind became troubled.

"When Mrs. Jordan left England, she took with her as a companion a lady who had for some years previously been employed in superintending the education of Mrs. Jordan's younger children, and who had for the last twelve months been Mrs.

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* See preceding note.

† Barton is not likely to have been wrong in stating that his last interview with Mrs. Jordan was in September.

‡ It would be interesting to know to what this amounted apart from what he got through his marriage with Mrs. Jordan's daughter.

Jordan's constant attendant. This person came to England in January, 1816, to receive and take to Mrs. Jordan her quarter's income, then in Messrs. Coutts's house. From the moment of her arrival in England until she quitted it she pursued a line of conduct towards the daughters of Mrs. Jordan (then residing in Mrs. Jordan's house*) that was offensive beyond measure. She peremptorily, and in the most insulting manner, called upon the person concerned with Mrs. Jordan in the affair of the bills and bonds to make oath that Mrs. Jordan was not liable to any claims beyond those of which she already knew; the demand was accompanied with base insinuations. Justly doubting this to be really the wish of Mrs. Jordan, and irritated at the circumstances attending the demand, it was refused; and on the same day this lady returned to France, and there is little doubt but then, for the first time, Mrs. Jordan did become 'apprehensive.'

"During her stay in England the lady alluded to informed two of Mrs. Jordan's daughters that Mrs. Jordan's future place of residence in France was to be kept a profound secret from them, and that all letters from them to their mother must be sent through a third person and directed to Mrs. James instead of Mrs. Jordan. Thus, from that time, all such communications first passed through the hands of a person who might withdraw Mrs. Jordan's confidence and affection from those most interested in getting her back to England. It is necessary to revert to the verbal refusal given to take the oath demanded, because it has been made a point of much importance as connected with Mrs. Jordan's state of feeling, in consequence of the publication made in the *Morning Chronicle* of 26th January, 1824, of a letter of Mrs. Jordan's bearing date, 16th January, 1816.

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* The house at Englefield Green ?

"Mrs. Jordan's letter must have been written immediately after the return of the above mentioned lady to France, and there is great reason to think that then only, for the first time, did a feeling of apprehension of further demands awake Mrs. Jordan's mind, and the fatal step of cutting off the source of communication prevented altogether, or perhaps only delayed, the receipt of a letter written by the person refusing to take the oath on the very same day, to say that he was truly willing to do whatever Mrs. Jordan should herself require and that the oath should be taken whenever she wrote to say it was her wish.

"There can be no question that the mind of this great woman had been long and grievously oppressed—nor will this be any matter of wonder when a retrospect is taken of her eventful life. Who can deny that in the greatest flow of her prosperity she had many bitter memorials that good and ill will mingle in every human condition? The greatest pleasure that acquiring wealth could bestow upon Mrs. Jordan was its affording her the power of shedding greater happiness around her. Can there be a severer censure on her memory than to think that pecuniary difficulties, even weighty (which hers never were), could for any length of time have depressed a mind such as hers, in its perfect state?"[*]

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[*] The comment on the above in the *Public and Private Life* is certainly pertinent:

"This document we take it for granted is given as a most satisfactory and conclusive elucidation of all that may be required by the reader on the subject of Mrs. Jordan's pecuniary embarrassments. Now, so far from conceding to such opinion, we regard this *authentic statement* as one of the most unsatisfactory and inconclusive papers we ever perused. The unfortunate lady, it seems, was very unexpectedly called upon to pay two thousand pounds, and not having assets so to do she, in order to secure her personal safety, fled into France. At the period alluded to she was in enjoyment of upwards of £2,000 a year, yet no security could be given nor any composition entered into with the claimants; finally, nothing short of expatriation could secure her safety. So much for the first paragraph. We are next told that during the lady's life-time, not *one shilling* was ever paid in *liquidation* of the bonds and bills whereon the £2,000 were claimed; and why? because the creditors were *personal friends* of the *debtor*, who felt *so perfectly satisfied* with her honourable conduct that nothing could be further from their minds than having recourse to any unpleasant measures. Then why, in the name of common sense, did she absent herself from England? and what is the meaning of the conclusive lines of the second paragraph, that *her protracted stay abroad was occasioned by untoward circumstances over which the* PRINCIPALS *had no control?* Who are the persons alluded to under the term PRINCIPALS? were they creditors; her own family; or the individual with whom she had last cohabited? We confess that there is something so enigmatical in this sentence that we are not ashamed to own our inability to solve its meaning."

CHAPTER XXIV

EPILOGUE

SO much has been heard, during the course of this book, of the criticisms of her contemporaries upon Mrs. Jordan that it will scarcely be considered necessary for us, when reaching the end, to bring forward more evidence as to the extremely high position which they united to assign to her as an actress. Occasionally an anonymous enemy decried her; but on professedly moral grounds, it must be noted. Some candid friends pointed out that she had her limitations.* But the general verdict is astonishingly at one concerning her excellence. It can have fallen to the lot of few artists to have counted a band of admirers so diverse as Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Byron, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Romney, Haydon, Crabb Robinson,† "Peter Pindar," Mrs. Inchbald, John Kemble

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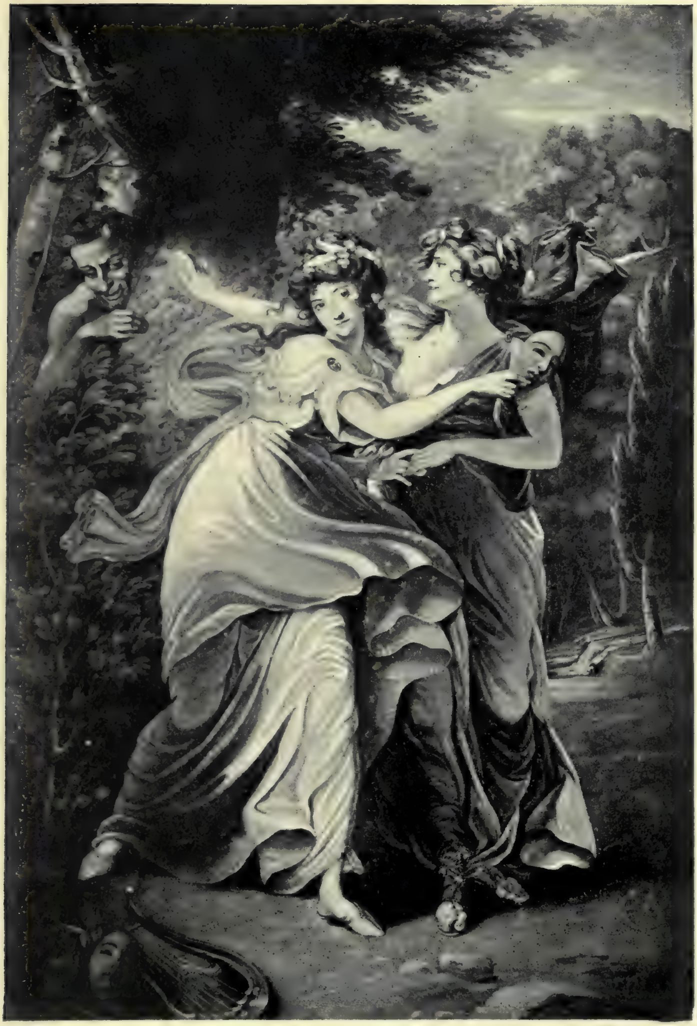
* John Taylor says that "she took in good part, and unaffectedly, any comments on her acting." He mentions that he himself was not a warm admirer of her when she first came to Drury Lane and that she had the sense not to resent his remarks on her performances.

† Robinson speaks of her and Mlle. Mars as the types of woman's fascination (*Diary*, Feb. 16th, 1858).



From a mezzotint engraving by T. Park after a painting by J. Hoppner.

MRS. JORDAN.

in the character of the Comic Muse.

[*Facing p.* 348.

(almost against his will), Lord North—and the Prince Regent.

Of the generous enthusiasm for Mrs. Jordan of her fellow-actors, other than Kemble, we need not speak,* for professional estimates are apt to be biassed by an over-keen appreciation of skilful technique. That she had mastered this technique, we know. But it was not that which cast a spell over the boxes and the galleries alike. Nor was it personal beauty, which so often has undue influence across the footlights. No one called her beautiful. To what we have heard already we may add the testimony of Oxberry: "In person Mrs. Jordan was about the middle size with a round face, not handsome, but pleasing; her figure, always inclining to embonpoint, latterly assumed a corpulency that considerably marred her efforts."†

What then was the secret of her charm? Boaden relates that "a critical friend once told her that he had detected it. It was, he declared, her *swindling* laugh. 'You have caught, madam,' he said, 'the hearty enjoyment of unrestrained infancy, delighting in its own buoyancy; and you have preserved this in children of a larger growth, who in the world are checked and blighted by decorum and art, authority and hypocrisy.' 'What,' exclaimed Mrs. Jordan, 'then you have found me out! Something very like what you say may be the secret of my success.'"

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* We may, however, quote Oxberry's summing up, "Take her all in all, she was a wonderful woman and possessed more natural genius for the profession she followed than any actress we ever saw."

† The author of the *Public and Private Life* copies this passage fairly closely, without acknowledgment, but substitutes "oval" for "round." Oval certainly seems a more appropriate description of Mrs. Jordan's face.

Genest admits that Mrs. Jordan was never handsome, "though she was peculiarly pleasing, and, as Wilkinson says, she sported the best leg ever seen on the stage."

J. D. Herbert says that she was marked with small-pox as a girl, but there seems to be no reference to this in other writers.

We do not know who the critical friend may have been. But it is worthy of note what stress other admirers, and particularly Hazlitt, laid upon the accomplishment on which he set so high a value. "Here," says Hazlitt, in *Some of the Old Actors*, "Mrs. Jordan's laugh comes over the heart, and if it has grown dry and seared fills it with the remembrance of joy and gladness once more." "Her smile had the effect of sunshine, and her laugh did one good to hear," he says elsewhere.* ". . . She was all gaiety, openness, and good-nature. She rioted in her fine animal spirits, and gave more pleasure than any other actress because she had the greatest spirit of enjoyment in herself."

Similarly Reynolds, whose favourite actress she was, declared that she "laughed from sheer wildness of delight." We have seen Barrington's description of how, in the early Dublin days, "youthful, joyous, animated, and droll, her laugh bubbled up from her heart." She made a remark once to Barrington, much later in life, which endorses Hazlitt's words about her possession of the spirit of enjoyment. "I heard the audience laugh at me," she said, "and I laughed at myself: they laughed again, so did I."

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* *View of the English Stage*, p. 168. In his best known description of Mrs. Jordan (*Dramatic Essays*, No. 1) may we not say that we hear the laugh, though the actual word is not mentioned? "Mrs. Jordan," he writes, "the child of nature, whose voice was a cordial to the heart, because it came from it, rich, full, like the luscious juice of the ripe grape; to hear whose voice was to drink nectar; whose smile 'made a sunshine,' not 'in the shady place,' but amidst dazzling lights and in glad theatres: who 'talked far above singing,' and whose singing was like the twang of Cupid's bow. . . ."

For the best characterisation of the laugh we must go to the professional Oxberry, quick to appreciate its technical beauty. It was, to him, "the most enlivening thing in nature, equally beyond praise and description; it rose gradually and and as gradually diminished, and the last sigh of its existence was as natural and effective as its loudest moment."

The reader will not misunderstand and so imagine that undue importance is being attributed by us to a single accomplishment. The laugh which fascinated Mrs. Jordan's hearers so much did so because it was exactly typical of the woman behind it, the woman formed, as Hazlitt says, by nature in her most prodigal humour—"and when Nature is in the humour to make a woman all that is delightful, she does it most effectually."

What irony there is in the fact that she who made herself immortal by a laugh should have died in misery so great that at the last she could not even shed a tear!

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